










**MINISTRY OF  
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‘I.Y.’

*AN IMPERIAL YEOMAN AT WAR*

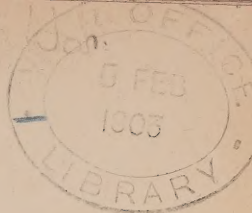




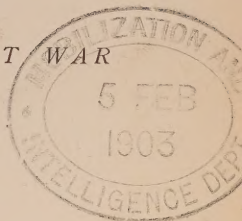
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‘I.Y.’



AN IMPERIAL YEOMAN AT WAR



BY

‘THE CORPORAL’

— C. —

14638



LONDON

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# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. HOME	I
II. MAITLAND	13
III. THE BROTHER BOER	25
IV. ON THE MARCH	37
V. ON OFFICERS	49
VI. ON DUTIES	64
VII. HOSPITALS AND MEN	86
VIII. THE HIATUS	111
IX. RECAPITULATORY	121



*For permission to print the passage dealing with the Queen's birthday celebrations at Bloemfontein, grateful acknowledgments are herewith made to the Editor of 'Vanity Fair.'*



## CHAPTER I

### HOME

PRAY take notice here at the outset, that these pages will not blush with becoming heroic modesty after marching through blood, fire and lead to a triumph of cold steel ; they will not so much as fire a shot, and will shrink horrified from carnage. All this is partly because in the Boer War there was no 'cold steel victory.' In the experiences of the Diarist of these pages, carnage and shooting figure in a minority, and carnage and shooting have been written of already beyond the limits of the 'unaugmentable maximum.' By avoiding them as much as is consistent with our task—defined below — we shall therefore get credit for originality, and, moreover, we wish not 'to fright the ladies' ; and if we must roar a little



in our heroics, it will be like immortal Bottom, 'as gently as any sucking-dove.'

At the moment of writing, many complete *histories*, mark you, of the present—one might say the current—war have already appeared. If one really wishes to be historically infallible in the matter, one might with confidence assert that at these same moments—the very infantile days of Nineteen Hundred and One—the War is not ended, neither does it offer any conclusive evidence of so much as the opening stages of its finale. From this the observant may see how history is written, and will read accordingly in the future. It is a true, though cherished platitude, that the disturbance produced in one's critical faculties by the excitation of racial feeling, personal animosity, passion, or the hundred and one animal vices that constitute the military hero, are slow of abatement. We venture to place the period of abatement at ten years, in the case of war, after the last shot has been fired; and by that period of time the whole belligerent performance must have become a matter of the Past, before

humanity can take an impartial and disinterested view of that which concerns it more closely than anything—that is, human slaughter. It is highly improbable that in ten years' time the political issues of our present fighting will be so much as matured.

This is a disclaimer of the crime of writing History. It is also somewhat of an apologetic introduction to your notice of a humble little visitor from the Seat of War, a quite obscure individual, being merely a Personal Record, *but a true one*. Having made the presentation, it becomes our business to explain the apologetic attitude in pointing out how the ceremony falls, strictly speaking, within the province of the Preface.

Readers don't read prefaces even if writers write them, and, editorially, we are compelled to draw attention to our Disclaimer on History, or, for that matter, the working of any of those literary miracles so common at the present epoch. So far from being a complete and finite record of *infinite* and incomplete occurrences, this volume is no more than a piece of litero-military impressionism, with

the military in the ascendant, containing, too, all the very doubtful merits of the Impressionistic. A mental impression is deepest coming straight from the crucible of current events. Hence, it seems reasonable to suppose that best results in impressionism will be procured from work done on the spot ; hence, too, this Edited Diary, written at various places, and contemporary with events at the Seat of War.

The Diarist is, or was, a Corporal of the Blanks Company of Imperial Yeomanry. We editorially act in collaboration with the Corporal ; and, to set the Reader's mind at rest, we pledge ourselves, if called upon so to do, to produce credentials for this collaboration more convincing for authenticity than for literature. For further instruction it should be pointed out that, broadly speaking, events related of one company of Yeomanry are, in the main, true of all ; from which readers may draw their own inferences. The Imperial Yeomanry has been used in the war to exhaustion. If the proof of the pudding is in the eating, here then is a dish

that might appear again with advantage in the military menu.

The Corporal insists on our inserting this sentence ; so, with this last little valedictory pat upon his own back before setting out, let us make for his Diary.

Though dealing with South Africa, it seems we begin our Corporeal depositions at Home, with, however, that which owes its inception to what happened at the Seat of War. The Corporal opens with playful banter on the stamp of recruit offering for Imperial service, and goes, somewhat at length for a Diary, into examples.

‘Patriotism,’ he writes laconically, ‘is a great motor impulse. The Imperial Yeomanry was born out of a paroxysm of Patriotism’—by a Devil of a Military Complication, to complete the pedigree. ‘What but the prospect of immolation upon the National Altar could have moved an actor, for instance, to modestly, but with the complacent resignation of a mediæval martyr, answer in the affirmative down the whole interrogative

scale of the Enlisting Power? Could he ride? Indeed, yes! Could he shoot? Metaphorically, the only rival Tell has had. Had he had military experience? Why ask? Why, indeed. Was he not an actor? 'Had the whole science of astronomy been an essential qualification for Mounted Infantry, here, at least, was one who would not have flinched. This candidate was accepted almost apologetically by the Enlisting Power for the Yeomanry tests. He—the candidate—wore his straw-coloured hair plastered down to the skull, radiating from a central parting to the nape of the neck, there to form a gratuitous brush to a dirty and abnormally rigid and high collar. He failed brilliantly in the riding and shooting, and returned early in January, 1900, to London, and, it is assumed, to the following of that occupation upon which alone he did not seem eager to give evidence of proficiency. Peace be with him! He is a regrettable, but substantial, reality.'

But the pseudo-sergeant? Ambitious He is, as he should be, something of sterner

stuff. ‘Oh, Sergeant’—remember it is the Corporal who speaks, or rather writes, between these inverted commas, and though editorially we cannot endorse his style, we will go bail for his veracity—‘oh, Sergeant, what but the most exalted patriotism shone on that eventful day of Enlistment out of thine eyes, so dark and beady in that pasty, porcine face of thine, anæmically glistening under thy well-oiled hair, coifed so studiously, and yet so saucily, after the military manner of the fashion “quiff”! Did thy clothes bespeak aught save military ardour, and of that the most fervent? If the habit speaks the man, what of thy collar? Was it not alone and unaided a very Fountain-Head of Eloquence? It was, if thou recallest, of the stand-up type, the whole of pristine whiteness, the points tending, as we who knew thee can affirm, in perpendicular to a line bisecting an angle of forty-five degrees to the vertical plane of thy body. It was jocularly talkative of the brighter side of patriotic service. Thy ample frock-coat, more of the formal cut, was, in elocutory matters, Rhetoric;

and thy stripy trousers a Masterly Peroration. No wonder that on that eventful day of enlistment, in that earnest, nervous crowd, though it included captains, majors, colonels, even a baronet, the rays of real interest focussed directly upon thee, ex-Sergeant-Major. If thy success was incomplete, if the fabric lacked the corner-stone Genuineness, should that condemn all the brilliant upper structure? Might not the cover close down upon such leaves as thou hast writ, and the book of the questionable past be sealed for ever? It seems not. For all thy masterly attention to detail, all thy fierce regimentalism, all thy patriotic ardour, gently tempered by the consciousness of thy pseudo-rank, have gone to nothing. Thou failedst to convince.'

'Thy many triumphs on that memorable Day of Enlistment, and Twenty-eighth Day of December, 1900, at the G—— Hotel, London, threw a total eclipse over us, of more mediocre clay and commoner mould,' to mix our metaphors. 'On the sandy veldt



of South Africa, where our humble methods did in the end prove successful in landing us, even though thy brilliant genius failed so to land thee, we have thought long and many times on thee—on how thou didst strive, strategize, and tacticize during the weeks of training until thou strodest, slapping thy ample leg with thy swagger-cane, out on parade with the plain, unassuming symbol of a crown on thy tunic-sleeve and the proud rank of Squadron-Sergeant-Major, than which surely none prouder need be hoped for. We have thought of this while wandering this past twelve months “i’ the Antipodes,” and wondered—and wonder still, for that matter—if it can be true that, though for long weeks of training thou didst convince all, up to the most experienced and down to the lowest unbelieving, that thou wast an ex-Sergeant-Major of Hussars, with past records of honourable, nay, distinguished, service—we wonder, yet, I say, if it can be true that thou failedst in the end; that, in short, thou who didst pose so valiantly as an ex-Sergeant-

Major of Hussars, who didst talk so glibly and with all modesty of past deeds, had in the past done nothing but seven months as infantryman or foot-slogger, wert neither distinguished nor valiant, and no Sergeant-Major at all. We have wondered also, while fighting the battles of our country, where and how has been employed that nervous and versatile genius of thine.'

'Thou too, art a substantial and doubly-regrettable reality. But the fabric thou endeavouredst to build had no corner-stone, and is now, alack! but as a heap of contractor's rubbish. Of that eager enlisting crowd we will take no more than these two unique examples—not necessarily examples of all Yeomanry, but being facts not to be passed over. Probably the chroniclers of other companies could offer something unique also.'

'In the main, the enlisters generalized were much of a muchness, some, alas! enlisting to serve their country abroad, some to serve their country in leaving it. Some there

were fidgety and nervous of the impending step ; some so gloomily doleful as to be afraid, after all, to take it, and yet afraid at the last to withdraw ; some, alas ! so downright averse to pledge themselves to *real* military service—"guns with bullets in them"—as actually to be slinking out into the street, and there gradually retreating, and in the end running away from the mere prospect of risking one's life on behalf of one's country and Queen. Such as these, though, have been few.'

'For the rest, be their motive patriotic or self-preservative, or but a bid for a little heroism cheap, a good round company of sound and capable men gets enrolled, in a few weeks drilled, equipped, mounted, and shipped off for good or ill to South Africa and the Front.'

We have abbreviated on the Corporal a little, as one can have too much of that florid style ; but the gist of what we have left out appertains to training, which consisted of the

Yeomanry's home drill, chiefly in learning how to move as a body of cavalry, plus the management and care of one's horse, and a few infantry movements in the field, such as the attack, retirement, etc.

And so much for the Yeomanry at Home.

## CHAPTER II

MAITLAND

**A**N *obiter dictum* of a private soldier, appearing in the Corporal's journal is in effect as follows: 'At home they read only of the sweets of soldiering, while we are experiencing the sour.'

We have transcribed the aphorism shorn of the inevitable objurgatory emphasis which appears in the Corporal's verbatim report, an emphasis which must be left to the inviolate provinces of uncrowned Poet-Laureateship.

'Tis a pity,' says the Corporal, whose style, you will have remarked, is not without naïveté—'tis a pity that the gentleness of gentlemen is not metricable'—measurable he means, of course. 'The web of yeomanly texture, like something else we know of, is

woven of a mingled yarn, and to the many "gentles" in the ranks' (the Corporal estimates, out of five hundred on board ship, two-thirds were 'gentles,' though he thinks then he is giving some doubtfuls the benefit of the doubt)—'gentles born and bred—we might, given a metrical system, estimate the effects of the sours, which must have been to them bitter indeed.'

Possibly, Corporal; and it is essentially their business to have estimated the potential bitterness of warfare in the ranks before engaging therein. What we want here to know is of those sweets and sours, and from that knowledge to draw our own conclusions; so to South Africa, or, better, to the Diary again, and the South-African-bound troopship, for there, if we recall rightly, the real, serious business of soldiering first bursts upon the enlightened sensibilities of Imperial Yeomen, gentle and ungentle.

Hear, then, the Corporal on board ship:

'This is our daily round: Stables 5 a.m., feed, water, exercise, and muck out'—pleasant task for 'gentles'—'and groom

horses, occupation extending in all till about 7 a.m., at which hour breakfast, consisting of bad coffee, which, in the tropics, after the above stable operations, we drink almost with gusto ; porridge, good, very good, and eaten quite with gusto ; very bad butter ; tolerable bread. Stables'—not an item on the breakfast-table—' again at 10.45 a.m., consisting of hosing horse-deck. At noon dinner (?) : inferior meat, detestable water, and sometimes pudding edible only with famine appetite, which, by the way, seems almost to prevail. Feed horses at 4 p.m. Tea at 4.30 p.m. : inferior. Feed horses again at 8.30 p.m. Bed at about 9.15 p.m. This is our day, intermediate times being filled up with our private affairs, such as washing ourselves and clothes, resting when we can, mounting guard.'

Bed, it appears, was adjourning to sleeping between stuffy decks, with three hundred horses stamping at a vertical distance of about three feet overhead, the sleeping to be done in hammocks slung shoulder to shoulder about as compactly, for purposes of metaphor,



as the most heroic brotherhood of barrelled herrings.

Apropos of the living, the Corporal mentions a canteen on the ship where tinned meats were obtainable at a price, to fill up the vacua in the Corporal's idea of what a troopship's menu should be, and also to fill up, we take it, the vacua in his and his comrades' anatomies. Moreover, the cooks at the officers' galley seem to have been not incorruptible, neither were the stewards found 'as adamant to the soft unction of half a crown, until, the canteen giving out, and a special order issuing against buying from ship's hands, we are driven once more'—we, the Corporal and his comrades in arms—'to severe transport fare,' which, it seems, included meals conducted on the 'rough-and-tumble principle, where not to grab for one's self is to go mealless,' and where evidently the finer punctilio and etiquette of gentle breeding are conspicuously absent. 'A Vere de Vere would have grabbed on a transport ship,' muses the Corporal.

Regarding stabling matters, the Corporal

makes the following noticeable entry : ‘ “ The men can go to hell ! The horses must be coddled to infinity, and the men must do the coddling. Damn the men ! look after the horses ! ” say the officers.’

All this above concerning the voyage may be either the ‘ sweet ’ or ‘ sour,’ but there is a coaling incident which, whatever it is, reads not sweetly. After coaling at Las Palmas, ‘ everything abaft the funnels lay under not less than one-eighth inch of coal-dust. Two companies of Yeomanry—*circa* two hundred and thirty men—mess, sleep, and store all their belongings abaft the funnel.’ The coal at Las Palmas seems to have been no whiter than at Newcastle, which is decidedly novel to the ‘ gentles.’ However, they bore up and got clean again, though the Corporal seems to imply that something more was wanting when he says : ‘ Every man landing for service in South Africa earns a medal. This coaling incident has earned us title to several.’

Peace, Corporal ! There is worse ahead.

We have an entry on the company aboard,

two squadrons, drawn, the Corporal strongly suspects, from the 'submerged tenth.' He conjectures that some have emerged to seek in South Africa greater latitude for the exercise of certain questionable talents than is offered by the more restricted conditions of English citizenship. The emerged in their emergence have brought with them much of the physical and moral habits of *submergence*. Amongst other habits, it seems, is a manifest inability to discriminate between what is mine and what is *not* mine, an indiscrimination most costly to the more worldly 'gentles' aboard. And of such stuff is the Kingdom of Patriotism !

For the rest of ship life, the Corporal touches briefly on the incidents of the voyage ; finds Las Palmas somewhat 'south continental,' and leaves it 'indolent and indifferent' ; eulogizes for smartness in ardent patriotism the sailors from an English gun-boat stationed there ; apostrophizes the greatness of the British Marine in, in his estimate, possessing seventy-five per cent. of the

shipping he sees ; anathematizes the British Government for sending two thousand Scots Guards and others on the transport *Britannic* through the tropics in red tunics and black trousers ; alludes passingly to a collided transport and mail - boat in a sinking condition ; is facetious about an angel - faced stowaway, who, on discovering himself bound for South Africa instead of North America, reveals an erudition in marine vocabulary that is the antithesis of angelic ; and ultimately lands fairly and squarely at Cape Town, and at the monster camp there, of mounted men, known now to history as Maitland Camp.

All this, however, not without incidents *en route* from the ship to camp, illustrating the Corporal's facetiousness and the effects of the 'Damn the men ! look after the horses !' policy upon the Corporal's horse.

He comes ashore, it appears, with 'the horse-leading party' in full marching order for the first time, it also appears, and appropriately so on first treading African soil on such a mission. 'Tunic, breeches, putties,

boots and spurs, side-arms (bayonet), haversack, mess-tin, water-bottle, rolled cloak over these, and a slung rifle over all.' Spick and span? Complete? Theoretically a perfectly-equipped fighting man for the Front? That we shall see when the Corporal gets to the Front.

'My horse,' continues he, 'was, in spite of the voyage, as fat and as greedy as a pig, and saluted every passing vehicle with a finished exposition of the equestrian *haute école*. Maitland Camp is five miles from the docks, two miles of which lie along the railway, and the other three are afflicted with a pestilence of traction-engines. Figure to yourself, then, that I executed with my equine partner all the known steps in equestrian calisthenics with "damnable iteration" for a space of two hours. The day was Africanly hot and steamy—remember the Yeoman's equipment—and believe, I felt myself to have begun real soldiering;' no doubt, metaphorically slapping my breast a little here.

Ah, and there must have been some novel

sensations amongst those Yeomen on first entering that busy camp under the shadow of Table Mountain, which, by the way, casts no shadow from a vertical sun. A camp containing some seven thousand, or, according to 'sanguine arithmeticians,' eleven thousand comrades, each and all there pausing awhile before stepping still further into the Unknown. And such an Unknown! now we *know* it. No wonder the Corporal finds 'some wonderingly anxious, some nervously so,' but, happily, all resolved to go through with it.

We are lapsing, however, from the practical into the regions of bathos, in which the Corporal is quite sufficiently expert an explorer.

As a practical matter, then, it seems there was but little time or opportunity for bodeful reflection under these new conditions of life, and, reading between the Corporal's lines, the anxiety seems to have been considerable amongst these resolute ones, lest they should fail, after all, to taste of the Unknown, and

that all the energy expended in preparation for serious war should be wasted.

It fell out quite otherwise, however.

The Corporal says—and he is an honourable man—that those seven or eleven thousand men worked, on an average, during their stay at Maitland, for a steady thirteen hours a day. Up at five a.m. ; the daily round, consisting of horse-grooming, horse-exercising, cleaning saddlery and arms, drilling, mounted and afoot, parading, guarding and fatiguing, lasts until seven a.m., and then—well, generally to the canteen for meat and drink ; for the Corporal's personal credit and *bonâ-fides* of this Diary, in his case, meat.

The concentrated essence of what the Corporal has to say here is in effect that those who ever saw it will never forget that scene in the canteen at Maitland when Maitland Camp was full—no, could not be full, seeing that all Maitland Camp was, for the nonce, in the canteen. The canteen was a tin building, by the way, about forty feet by twenty. And the laughing and the talking



in dim lamplight, and the chance meeting of old friends or the making of new ones there—for everybody had to be friends, patriotism being such a leveller. And the drinking, and—oh my!—the swearing! If the army swore terribly in Flanders, it swore magnificently in South Africa, and the Yeomanry did its share. Though the infantryman in the present war adds new lustre to the objurgatory vocabulary of his country, the mounted man surpasses him in blasphemous embellishment in possessing the advantage of a horse as an additional imprecatory objective. The most milk-and-watery Yeoman returning from South Africa cannot reproach himself with having failed in the opportunity of becoming a finished blasphemer.

According to the Corporal's observation, the most irresponsible ideas of men bubble out at the mouth on the eve of coming events, and in spite, too—according to *our* canteen observations—of an incoming tide of powerful and frequent libation.

Oh, what a bubbling was there, my friends! The Imperial Yeoman on familiar acquaint-

ance has never laid bare in the depths of his temperament a sublimate of modest reticence. So 'this noisy, nervous, restless scene is only to be imagined by those familiar with the motley of its constituent parts, the events environing it, and the extreme ambiguity of its impending destiny.' And that ambiguity, says the Corporal, 'is only surpassed by the obscurity enveloping staff operations, and the staff is the controller of our destinies.'

But we shall here exercise our editorial privilege in not listening any longer to the Corporal's bubblings at Maitland; in fact, we shall on all occasions prune him pretty severely, except in those obscure corners where his fine-drawn, fatuous imagination outranges the weapons of editorial mediocrity.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BROTHER BOER

ANYHOW, the real soldiering has begun—*teste* the following entry while Corporal of the Guard: ‘I have to leave the guard tent to arrest the person of a sentry who has transferred his vigilance to the canteen;’ or this one seems to testify to soldiering; ‘we marched through the Colony in all the pomp and circumstance of war to impress the disaffected Dutch,’ who must have been very much impressed, seeing that they ‘shook their fists at us, threatened us openly, and wished we might never return,’ which, by the way, we never did, that part of the country being left peacefully to the benignant showers of magnanimity that have got England into such a devil of a mess.

Ultimately the Corporal with his Company gets by way of Stellenbosch *inter alia*, with its 'sweltering, hot, stinking camp of damnable, fly-infested tents,' to Bloemfontein, and there starts out on an expedition after renegade Johannesburg Zaps, or police, who have been looting and murdering loyal, or putatively loyal, Dutch, and, by the way, never catches them, but becomes more temperate in his language, and throws some interesting side-lights upon the supposed early termination of the yet unfinished war, and also upon the ways and manners of his brother Boer, to whom we shall devote this chapter.

His—the brother Boer's—army is not 'a compilation of Cincinnatuses, as apostrophized by Exeter Hall and the other hystericals at home.' That, like Cincinnatus, the Boer had no senatorial nor first consular nor imperial ambitions in contemplation, but a simple return to humble husbandry, is amply testified by the Corporal's notes of May, or thereabouts, at Abraham's Kraal, O.R.C.

Abraham's Kraal is an important place on

the Kimberley-Bloemfontein road, the scene of the Boer *sauve qui peut*—and they were not too numerous *qui pouvaient*—of the Paardeberg relief force, also of one of Generals French and Kelly-Kenny's severest actions, leaving behind it a memento of many unburied or half-buried Boer dead on a neighbouring kopje, after seeing which the Corporal is only able to reflect that 'the Boer falsely minimized casualty lists, issued from Boer headquarters, are the only evidences of Dutch humour we have yet fallen in with.'

'Everybody we encountered here,' he says, 'only confirms the report of delusive inducement put forward to incite these Boers,' who, it must be admitted, were, for Cincinnatuses, a little laggardly in the warring business, 'to fight.' It appears, too, that the Corporal heard with his own ears in this district that, in the beginnings of this war, the rank and file of this Boer army was told and believed that their fighting occupation would consist of no more than sjamboking the British army into the sea ; and yet those same ears heard that even for that trivial performance the

Boers had to be driven into action at the revolver's muzzle.

No doubt Cincinnatus spirits turned to such undignified weapons as the sjambok, only under the influence of loaded pistols. Besides—oh, Exeter Hall!—are they not detained at home in the business of sjamboking their own nigger servants?

In the neighbourhood of Abraham's Kraal the Corporal finds the handful of white residents who saw all the stirring events of that district—so unflattering to Cincinnatus, his army—in spite of these events, 'most friendly to us.' Indeed, Corporal, it is not indiscreet to be friendly with the armed representatives of those, with whom, in our little struggles, we come off second best.

'On the other hand, this Dutch population had no good word to say of Kruger and Co.'—possibly none, seeing that at the moment Oom Paul was escorting bullion out of the country—'and confirmed our impression that the merciful and generous peasant laying down life and living for his country was, in

the vicinity of Abraham's Kraal, a snare and a delusion.'

Of course, this is merely litero-military impressionism of the moment, and must be taken at its market value. Here is some more of the same article a day or so later :

'At Somebody or Other's Kraal'—or Fontein or Kop or Nek or Poort or Kloof, about twelve miles from that of Abraham ; the Corporal gets into a district where 'the Free Staters have thrown up the fighting business'—in June, 1900, Corporal?—'collecting arms and ammunition,' some of which ammunition, by the way, the Corporal finds covered with verdigris, but cannot discriminate between this as a Boer guile to inflict poisonous wounds or an advantageous experience in the perfection of small arms fire. 'We had many a talk with these Free Staters, some of whom had been at Stormberg and Magersfontein,' where they had no just need to grumble at their success, 'and yet returned to their homes secretly'—returning to a resumption of domestic comforts and security, no doubt ; foregoing the higher

privilege of immolation on the altar of patriotism, and with becoming modesty doing so by stealth. They all had one story, it appears. 'The war was not the people's war, it was the Government's. The people had no animosity against England, would never have fought against her troops, in fact, had it not been for the alternative of confiscation of their *lares* and *penates*, if not of being murdered in cold blood.'

'We b̄artered amicably in forage and food-stuff with all the Boers in this district, giving receipts to be acknowledged by the military authorities at an early date'—and presumably a more peaceful one. This evidence of such excessive cordiality between enemies should give very great satisfaction at Exeter Hall, and do much to promote the augmentation of hysteria there. We quote it merely to throw a little ray of the sunshine of human sympathy into the otherwise monotonous dulness of those obscurities. We also for the same purpose point out that the Corporal's battalion a month or two later in the same locality met 'with a reception of lively pom-pom and



shell fire,' presumably a *feu de joie* at seeing old friends; also a liberal sprinkling of Mauser bullets—no doubt a playful, bantering way of reminding one of one's debts for forage, etc.

If more evidence of friendliness is wanted—and, anyhow, more light on Boer characteristics may not be amiss—we can look for it in another page of the Diary and yet another corner of the Free State.

'We have,' says the Diary, 'here a friendly butcher who sells us sausages'—there is nothing friendly in that!—'who is most obliging and attentive to all the English here.' Or, again: 'At the first watering-place on the Senekal road is a farmer whose sole aim in life appears to do by stealth all in his power to further the success of our operations against the enemy in the immediate neighbourhood.' More than this: it appears from the Corporal's depositions that he 'entertains us, even gives the hospitality of his establishment to our officers free of charge'—most unusual with Boers—'and at the same price finds game for their guns,' purely in the sporting and non-combatant

sense. After leaving this corner of the Free State, we find the Corporal hears that this delectable butcher was suspended from selling sausages, pending trial for treachery, and the farmer suspended by the neck—pending burial—from a neighbouring tree for espionage.

Only once does the Corporal meet with unfriendliness from the enemy. Being with two comrades, benighted on the veldt, where 'night is night, we stopped at a lonely farm where, by the dim light of a brass oil-lamp'—of English manufacture, 'his inquisitiveness remarks—'we eat bread-and-butter and drink milk under the most unfriendly gaze of three pairs of Free State eyes, for which we have to pay'—the food and drink, he means—'knowing full well—as they know, too—that our hosts have only to report in camp to the commanding officer, who will immediately exact payment for them or punishment for us.' Obviously, a show of friendliness would be wasted there.

Many are the cases where small detached bodies of scouts or patrols have been received,

if not cordially, at least hospitably, at farm-houses, and departed therefrom with a valedictory discharge of ball cartridge from arms and men heretofore concealed.'

All these above examples, though not within the ken of every Yeoman, are nevertheless the common experience of the force as a whole. On the other hand, some Yeomanry will be able to testify that their friendly reception has not only been cordial, but has subsequently turned out sincere and permanent. The Corporal so testified, but too highly flown for quotation. This cordiality and sincerity, however, come from the intelligent Boer farmer, whose intelligence is of that kind which enables him to see the inevitable, and the folly of fighting against it; intelligence that is not the crafty animal—and, as has been proved—stupid cunning that finds so much favour at Exeter Hall.

These little side-glimpses into Boer life are not, if looked closely into, without discrepancies, which the prying Corporal has not overlooked. He having been on the spot, and

in the chaos of influences at work in the Boer War, we may as well look at such chaos through his instructive eyes; it draws from him the following inference: 'Generalizing'—he leans to pomposity—'generalizing, the leading characteristic of the Boer temperament is domesticity. His farm—which to European eyes looks more often than not like an irresponsible brick-kiln—is his all. He wants only to be left to sit there at peace with the world and with goodwill toward men, only to sit on the *stoep* and smoke his dry South African tobacco in his clumsy Dutch pipe, to occasionally read his Dutch Bible, to see his flocks grow numerous and his herds grow fat, and sjambok his Kaffirs if they don't.' This last is evidently the goodwill towards men. 'This domesticism is stronger than patriotism, and moves him—circumstances so requiring—to defend it and himself *vi et armis*,' like a true patriot, Corporal? 'His bugbear is the rupture of the domestic tie, before which the conquest or annexation of his country may go hang. Hence he has fought—fought long; in some

cases not badly, and with that innate cunning which has led his leaders to flaunt for ever before his eyes the bugbear of expatriation as a fresh incitation to his flagging bellicosity. He believes now from his soul that expatriation is the only consequence to surrender. Hence he is metamorphosed from cunning unsophistication to cunning prejudice, and consequently carries on a protracted, bitter struggle with those who most want to give him what he most is fighting for. This is illogical.' Quite, Corporal, though it is not wholly illogical to decline to live in your farm when your enemy has burnt it down. This, however, by the way, and as a later complication not bearing on this present argument. 'In fact, had the British Intelligence Department—in whose province the business possibly rightly falls—penetrated this veil of prejudice, the Boer had by now been perchance, if not our friend, at least a peaceful neutral, farming the farms which then there had been no occasion to burn.'

The Corporal's strictures on the Boer

population apply exclusively to the agricultural districts of the Free State and South African Republic. Although no statistics exist yet in proof of his opinion, he nevertheless thinks the agricultural, and not the urban population, will be found to have largely preponderated in the Boer ranks.

As to the value of his remarks, that is a matter entirely for the judgment of the reader. Again we stand by him in vouching for his veracity, and again we must drop out a reminder of the demerits and shortcomings of impressionism.

## CHAPTER IV

### ON THE MARCH

PEOPLE may, of course, be wholly indifferent to the opinions of one who, like the Corporal, has enjoyed so intimate an intercourse with the enemy, turning rather with preference to those prodigal writings on South African warfare by those with no acquaintance at all, either with South Africa or war. In fact, we know of such who collect material for a practical exposition of warfare that is to be final on all points and for all time. We can confidently assert that it will be so. Still, with the Corporal's help we shall persevere in our first intention.

We now find the Yeomanry on the march, and from our humble standpoint it is given

us to see how the Corporal and his men fare thereon.

Bravely, it appears. And yet, ingrate that he is, not uncritically nor, alas! uncomplainingly. We already know that he sets out from Maitland to intimidate the disaffected whose sinister looks fell upon him and his thus arrayed in the panoply of war: 'Mounted,' dressed as per landing by regimental order, save the cloak, which we now find 'rolled, under severe penalties for infringement, to mathematical accuracy of forty inches longitude by four diameter.' The Corporal thinks these dimensions are determined by brigade order, the brigade command evidently being very solicitous of our well-being. 'The cloak thus rolled is strapped over the wallet, which hangs on each side of the saddle pommel, each containing spare socks, spare underclothing, razor, brush and comb and towel,' and, doubtless, on the saddles of the 'gentles' a tooth-brush; 'all these disposed in proper order according to regulation' on the cloak-rolling principle of solicitude, probably by order of the Com-



mander-in-Chief. 'On each wallet an extra boot'—by some unpardonable oversight, it is not mentioned whether for one foot or both ; 'all neatly strapped, which remark applies also to the rear-pack on the cantle, containing rolled blanket, fractionally precise at twenty-four inches, spare breeches, spare tunic, spare putties, and superimposed thereon,' with due regard to topographical infallibility, no doubt, 'one picket-peg and one waterproof sheet.' Judging by former precedents, this last arrangement must have been by Act of Parliament. 'From the near side of the saddle depends, in or near an absolute perpendicular, one well-filled nose-bag'—for the horse, not the man, you will notice. 'It is supposed by the more enlightened to be placed there in order to enhance the already irrestrainable tendency of the saddle, as above fitted, to slip round under the horse's belly to such an extent as to insure the infallibility of that occurrence by these additional adjuncts on the near side when, in mounting, tardiness or belation will invariably jeopardize the horseman's future serviceability to his

country's cause,' which savours distinctly of the Home Government.

To take the words out of the Corporal's voluminous verbosity, this and other impedimenta to both horse and rider are the evolved perfection of that military arm known as Mounted Infantry ; designed for rapid movement, and capable, thus encumbered, of movements the slowest of all mounted troops. Thus equipped, and with a bandolier bristling with live ammunition, the Corporal and his men slowly intimidate the disaffected, with results as we have seen. And all this for the disaffected? To what length will this paternal Military System go for the openly bellicose?

With patience and with the System, we shall see.

Meanwhile, alternately walking afoot and riding a-horse, we proceed steadily—whither? 'Towards the impenetrable vale of official reticence,' answers the Corporal, 'the Yeoman not being credited with sufficient intelligence to care about his destination in these stirring events. For impenetrable inscrutability, the

military official mind resembles——' Here the Corporal is obliged to dip into his mythological knowledge for a simile, and, finding there Nothing, proceeds to bivouac.

'A bivouac—what is it? In South Africa 'tis like Iago's purse. Something—nothing. 'Tis here, 'tis gone for ever. First it is a bare open veldt, practically nothing. Next it is an unformed kaleidoscopic jumble of armed men, mounted and afoot; of guns, galloping officers and orderlies. Next it is all order and regularity, showing here and there, perhaps, one small row of symmetrically pitched tents and parallel lines of horses, saddlery and guns. Again it is, on a background of night, a sparkle of camp-fires and half-revealed cloaked figures; and at the next coming of daylight it is again nothing, or, if not, 'tis nothing but ashes and empty meat and biscuit tins, and contains no living thing, except, perhaps, some wretched sick horse too sick to carry that ponderous burden described above, and therefore pitilessly left to struggle after his companions as best he may; or left to the tender mercies of the

vultures, or who or whatsoever first comes across him in his desertion; which done, the bivouac is again nothing. Nothing but desolate Veldt.

*En passant*, it may be as well to mention in connection with these vultures, which the Corporal seems disposed to anathematize, that they are protected by law in South Africa. This saved our Army much in scavenging.

With the accompaniment of intimidatory expeditions, bivouac and the assistance of railway trains, the Corporal and his Diary get, as we already know, to Bloemfontein, a town which he 'finds planted down on the High Veldt, than which there is for monotony not the like anywhere, except, perhaps, in Sahara. As the Capital Town of a State that was for sjamboking the British Army into the sea, Bloemfontein is far too Modest;' bristling, though, at the time of the Corporal's visit, with Union Jacks, so, evidently, outgrowing this unfortunate shyness. 'Great place for dust-storms, in consistency resembling an itinerant gravel-pit. One such swept before a forty-mile wind over the

camp of some thousand tents, oddly enough injuring only one, a Church Army's mission tent, and flattening that even with the ground on Sunday at evensong'—while the remaining nine hundred and ninety-nine tents of the ungodly stood firm on the rock-bed of unrighteousness. Irony! but 'twas ever thus, Corporal.

Here are more samples of marching experience which, though somewhat reiteratory, we quote, as they take us through the transition between the intimidatory and the openly bellicose, throwing light, by the strange metamorphoses in equipment here depicted, on the inner workings of the Official Mind.

The entry opens with a warmth of feeling that can only be the outcome of a red-hot impression. 'We start out in full marching order as before,' which seems to irritate the Corporal from the beginning when he continues—'as an instance of official blundering or fooling, we leave a military base-camp at Bloemfontein in no pressing hurry, but—breakfastless. Not the most ardent official partisan will convince us that Bloemfontein

at that time contained no breakfast, especially as we were carrying seven days' rations with us. After a twenty-four miles march, without food and water, except such as could be drawn from a muddy well *en route*; after groping out a bivouac by matchlight in Stygian darkness, we come to the conclusion, when lying down to sleep under the benevolent canopy of heaven, that we have been submitted intentionally to a little Spartan training in the usages of warfare according to official tenets.' O strange conclusion to fall in with upon the 'flint and steely couch of war,' but probably a correct interpretation of the revealed inner workings of the Official Mind, particularly when we remember that food and drink had been accessible throughout. The Corporal is a little too controversial, perhaps, over what, after all, may be only an isolated instance. But the anecdote of the matchlight bivouac, though it savours somewhat of 'the taper light wherewith to garnish the beauteous eye of heaven,' is, none the less, true enough, in spite of the 'benevolent canopies,' and so forth.

That fast of a day is more or less isolated, for, in subsequent marchings and counter-marchings, we get 'bully beef (horse?) and a species of inedible dog-biscuit, relishable in the last stages of siege hunger. We made it palatable one day, however,' myself and a comrade flank patrolling did, 'with two pounds of excellent butter which the occupants of a farmhouse flying before our advance had not been too hurried to conceal,' but too hurried to conceal securely enough to escape our patrolling lynx-eyes. The butter must have been good, for elsewhere the Corporal finds 'hungry dogs politely but firmly declining army biscuit.'

'If biscuits must be carried, why not carry edible ones?' the Corporal pertinently asks, and the answer is, Why not, indeed? 'Many men have been invalided home with ravenous teeth broken off in these fasting times on this adamantine biscuit.' But it was not all so bad, milk and eggs from the farms sprinkled at intervals of between five and ten miles, being purchasable to those with money. To those without, the ephemeral

luxury of contemplating the future delights of back-pay received, was always accessible.

In this way, as a rule, with unimportant variations, we conduct marching in the war and go through that transition for which such elaborate and finicking preparation was made only to finally adopt the following fighting order.

‘We carry one blanket under the saddle, and those who have two throw the odd one on a convoy waggon; any spare articles being put with this — by stealth generally. For ourselves, we wear what we stand up in’ — and lie down in it at nights, Corporal. ‘Mess-tins may be carried anyhow. We have for the most part empty wallets, except when loot is plentiful and permissible. Spare boots are almost out of memory, and we ride in the heat of the day in our shirt-sleeves, tunics carried in the way coming handiest, cloaks folded or unfolded, thrown on the saddle and strapped there by “Law of Expedition.”’ This is the final marching order kit for the stern realities of war, and is regulated neither by Brigade Order, General



Army Order, nor by Act of Parliament, but is an injunction direct from the headquarters of Expediency, of whom Necessity is the Chief of Staff—on which Staff Common-Sense ought also to be.

The same injunction governs the order of our going, too, which is of the ‘go as you please genus’ so long as the cohesion is sufficiently maintained for squadron movements or emergency. Whereas in the beginnings of elaboration ‘we were an excessively encumbered force *expecting to do*, in the endings we seem to have been a force exceedingly shorn, but *having done and doing.*’

‘And yet,’ moralizes the Corporal, ‘in our unshorn stage some hundred thousand men had learnt by costly and bitter experiences the disadvantages of encumbrance; and still, though we listened daily to the narrations of these experiences, daily our encumbrances grew.’ Then he puts the blame on to Military System, and excuses it on the ground that ‘what is so patent here in the clear-cut South African atmosphere seems

not to have forced its way through the incrustations of centuries in the foggy nebulosities of Pall Mall,' and for the System's guidance points out the moral of his marchings when he says 'it is inexpedient when equipping a force, for rapidity of movement, to load that force's units with encumbrances to any movement at all.'

'One's clothes wear into holes, some into shreds, but rifles remain clean and our bandoliers full, though we even do not eat as much as we might;' a right soldierly sentiment with which to conclude the Corporal's impressions of the march, more particularly when he says that this condition is a modification of orders from the headquarters of Expediency and Necessity, 'who, we find more often than not, regulate the measure of our successes and failures in the field;' and also make us the grim-looking, little-smiling, but resolute and real fighting body that we Yeomen have now become through our learnings 'On the March.'

## CHAPTER V

### ON OFFICERS

**P**REMISED by the postulate that on the restricted horizons visible from the ranks it is impossible to see that which is disclosed to the vertiginous altitude scaled at one bound by the erst-while civilian Yeomanry officer, we cogitate upon the Corporal's opinion of the Yeomanry commissioned ranks.

‘Damn the men! take care of the horses!’ seems to be his text for this discourse, and therein he finds ‘that his officers work things by contraries. In the intimidatory periods everything seems to have been carried out with the utmost thoroughness. Evolutions against an enemy which did not exist were shrouded behind a veil of swarming cunctatory scouts. Evolutions against

an enemy that did exist were conducted with a frankness so engaging in its open candour as to disarm any enemy but a Boer of his inimical propensities. Ambushes that did not exist were never discovered ; those that did were, when allowed by topographical conformation, entered in column of squadrons, failing a more compact cavalry formation.' One must allow a little here for figures of speech.

In early beginnings all seems not to have been the milk of human kindness flowing in the breasts of those in command, 'the attitude of the officers towards the men' being that 'of superior beings allowing, by special grace of superior position, the existence of their inferiors in rank to continue on sufferance and subject to penalties. Why is a soldier treated thus? No wonder he gets a bad name,' and, like the proverbial dog with that appendage, gets a metaphorical hanging. 'This kind of treatment will unmake more good men than it will make good soldiers ; anyhow, it is a method that will unmake more good Yeomen than correct

bad ones. And the Yeomanry, it must be remembered, are volunteers,' one of which, we are led to understand, is worth ten pressed men. 'But the fact is ignored that we are volunteers. It is against military doctrine to recognise that, apparently.' Possibly that is why, like good doctrinaires, the Corporal and his men got, as he says they did, insufficient food, but an extensive canteen in which to spend the private means of which the military doctrine took ready enough cognisance.

'The class from which the commissioned Yeomanry was drawn was mostly nondescript, or, if describable, more than anything, perhaps, formed of superannuated or retired army officers. Is it fair to assume that superannuation is the hall-mark of failure to rise to the not over-elevated standards of the military profession?' The Corporal is facetious again. 'We find our officers past-masters in the art of objurgatory vituperation,' or swearing. 'Our manœuvres are embellished by them with expletives, so original, so subtly chosen, and delivered with such pungent emphasis, as seems likely to

undermine the hitherto unassailable reputation of Billingsgate. I admit,' continues the Corporal, 'that we are thus favoured only when found fault with ; but as the officer's attitude is one of indiscriminating and egregious ability to find fault where no fault exists, his language is correspondingly uniform. Certainly we may be exceptional, but comparison of notes with other Yeomanry reveals much the same experience for the privileges of voluntarily fighting for one's country.'

We should accept the above with some reserve did we not know the Corporal's veracity to be above suspicion, and also that what he wrote he wrote on the spot. He isn't in love with his officer's tactics either. For instance : 'We marched in here last night with about five hours' daylight to spare and a Drift to keep under observation. Apparently the darkest of dark nights is the best light by which to take observations of unknown ground. Preliminary survey of the Drift or any such assistance was dispensed with contemptuously, and pitch darkness

having arrived and sufficiently obscured everything, through unknown two miles of Bush to unknown Drift we are formally picketed by an officer, who, by the way, loses himself in returning to camp; not before informing us, though, that the enemy might come on our front, or, on quite the other hand, might approach from our rear. In any case, we were to watch our front. The enemy, who could, had he known, have complacently wiped out this picket from adjacent dongas and bushes not fifty yards away, earned our everlasting gratitude by not approaching us or our Drift at all.' Again: 'The Blanks Company of Imperial Yeomen has been led more than once in unextended order to within fifty yards of Boer positions, under officers who ignore the caution that the Boer position is occupied. Naturally, there follows a *sauve qui peut* for those left who can, to the nearest cover, where it not infrequently happens men are left for hours without orders. The Blanks have also enjoyed the experience of being roused at daylight by a persistent shell fire dropping

in their bivouac, and have had, under those conditions, to fall in, and act under the orders of non-commissioned officers—others failing.’ No wonder the Corporal finds his company reduced by over thirty per cent. on rejoining it out of hospital.

But he is really very severe on his commanders. After all, he seems entirely to forget how precisely we rolled our cloaks in the intimidatory stages, and was not he himself at peaceful Maitland paraded before the Captain’s tent and there let off with a caution?—the penalties of having a wrinkle or something equally monstrous in his numnah. The only reprimand in thy military career, Corporal, and yet thou forgottest it! Possibly thou hast also forgotten that in warlike Pretoria and elsewhere it mattered not a Yeomanry officer’s imprecation whether one’s numnah were an entire accordion pleat or whether one had no numnah at all!

There is something of the ‘gentle’ in the following. ‘It really seems amusing, if not absurd, to have to “sir” and salute



the mere lads that some of the officers are.' Evidently not one of the sour of soldiering if there is amusement therein. But here again the administration of discipline, running counter to reason, apparently, impresses the 'gentles.' 'Camping-ground is nearly always selected as far away from recreation or comfort as obtainable, on a spot generally chosen, it is thought, for its personification of monotony' or splendid isolation—'a species of Tantalus punishment after the past days of marching over ultra-monotonous Veldt. There may be a hidden reason for thus pitching camp which is admirably sufficient—it is admirably hidden.' Evidently the warmth of the Corporal's feelings, if not of the 'gentles' throughout, is getting the better of his discrimination; for at the time of the following entry, although hanging for a long time on the fringe of battle, so close in fact as to come under the salutation of vicarious snipers, the Corporal seems disposed to put the blame for this masterly inactivity on his officers. In acting with the Blanks as escort to big guns, going to relieve

a convoy attacked, 'compelled after months of menial labour and worse than menial occupation to turn back on the sounds of the engagement without any participation,' he could easily have 'shed tears of disappointment,' could the Corporal, and from the depths of his chagrin inclines to blame his officers, or some of them, for denying him the thing he came seven thousand miles for—to fight withal. 'The feeling in the Company is very bitter.' After all, fighting with Mausers and Enfields and other weapons of destruction is not an unalloyed joy to all. And, if you remember, at a much later stage, the feeling in the Company was almost as bitter at having had, if not too much fighting, at least too much of the 'real article.' The presumptive sweets of soldiering had then begun a little to curdle.

That the feeling of the Company was strong is made clear when the Corporal 'assisted at a parade before the Company officers to ascertain the meaning of our inactivity,' a most irregular parade, and consequently officially snubbed, which possibly

exonerates the officers from all blame in the business. They may have seen things from their vertiginous altitudes which the Corporal could not.

The Blanks Company has our most hearty sympathy. No Yeoman that has been out to South Africa will deny that in contemplating what lay before him he, in the beginning, looked upon the actual fighting, with all its risks, as the sweet of life—the poetry ; and the monotonous patrolling, the camp life and duty, and even the escorting of guns into action, as the sour—or prose. The Yeomen came to serve their country heroically. The heroics of service are more apparent in battle, if perhaps no more real than on patrol and other duty. The Corporal has our special sympathy, as it became his lot to be stricken down with prosaic fever, and to miss much of the privilege of being maimed or killed by gunpowder. But ‘he also serves who stands and waits,’ Corporal, and those who did that in South Africa deserve well of their country.

But what for contrariness is there to beat

a Yeoman corporal? All these pictures, all this bitterness, this dragging up of little details in stern arraignment of his superiors, whom he is in no position to arraign, how do they tally with his silence, on the subject of spare clothing, when with the column he is in rags? His bare skin protrudes through his breeches knees; some men's clothes hang on them in 'strips of khaki or cord, according to anatomical locality of upper or nether man.' And yet he would reduce the convoy because—he now writes north-east of Pretoria, and in the recrudescence of the fighting—'we ran into the Boer pickets last night'—marching at night now, which is the real thing—'and this morning, while on the flank advance, received the order to trot, then to gallop; came up with the Boer rear-guard retiring over the next hill, and just when making inward spiritual preparation for real business'—and a possible transmission to less troubled spheres—'we halt, while the enemy retires gracefully—knowing our methods by now—stopping coolly to survey us.'

‘Why halt? Why halted?’ Because we have outdistanced our convoy, which to leave further behind would be to jeopardize with our little worldly possessions, putting them at the mercy of a turning movement of Boers, whose excellent primitiveness does not allow of slow, encumbering convoys. More convoy would clothe and feed the Corporal better, yet he resumes his strictures on the officers that the convoy is not reduced. ‘Two-thirds of our waggons contain officers’ kit, the other third, men’s spare blankets. Our Company, now reduced to sixty men and four officers, has three waggons: two for four officers, one for sixty men. The officer commanding this column that is constantly in touch with the “volatile Boer” carries with him a double-compartmented tent (all the officers have tents), has a bath and hot shaving-water every morning, and turns out on the high veldt, on a Boer-fighting errand, groomed, man and horse, to do credit to Rotten Row.’

Too much zeal seems to be the Corporal’s failing—too much zeal, evidently, for the Yeo-

manry officer, whom at first he abuses when going short, and now abuses for not shortening him further—or, anyhow, for the officer not shortening himself.

We intended to confine this chapter to Yeomanry officers, but the Corporal hits out so irresponsibly that we find him censuring an ‘officer of the line’; he of the double-barrelled tent, bath-cum-shaving-water to wit. And, lest this may lead to misrepresentation, we must here acknowledge that the Corporal has nothing but generous eulogy of his treatment at the hands of ‘regular’ officers. True, he is not eulogistic of their tactics, nor probably they of his, but he bears tribute that, they ‘treated us on all occasions, so far as my own experience and that of many more of us go, with the utmost kindness, recognising—in fact, emphasizing—their recognition of the fact that we were not regular soldiers’—in fact, were ‘gentles,’ some of us—‘and, while tactfully maintaining the distinction of rank, did all in their power to smooth things down for us, and to help us as far as possible on all occasions.’ Bravo! But, after all,

the English officer, with all his professional failings, is essentially a brave, upright, English gentleman. So the army is less an occasion for alarm than reconstruction.

We prefaced this chapter with a little metaphorical physics on the subjects of altitude and visible horizon. Peradventure, were we able for the moment to take our stand upon the higher 'commissioned' eminence, we might see things differently. From there 'the drift of dark night' episode might look not so fearsome. There may have been no enemy anywhere near. The dispositions were certainly suitable to such a contingency. It may have been an effervescence of playfulness, a sort of turnip-headed bogie, and not a serious danger. Or that of the shelling, officers retiring, perhaps to a coign of vantage, whence to enjoy the spectacle of the men's discomfiture; or that marching up to Boer rifle-pits and the scuttling back *pêle-mêle*. And, on reporting himself when returning from hospital, the Corporal is told by an officer 'he is more fool for coming back,'—what is that

answer if not the 'repartee farcical'? Or possibly it is an encouragement to do one's duty. All this, could we but see it from a less humble point of view, might turn out a titanic feat of official playfulness. And, after all, that scuttling about under fire, considered spectatorially, must have been 'vastly diverting,' as Sir Peter Teazle would have said. It almost seems to corroborate our surmise when, in a later entry, the Corporal admits that 'he is trying to find someone who takes the war in earnest.' All seeing such fun in it, he is scouring South Africa and the army for such a one, but fails apparently, so jots down what he thinks without revision, and what we repeat without prejudice.

But things mend later on when all the tinsel is off the fighting gingerbread, and no Yeoman will have found it a very enduring decoration. He is less censorious, finds the officers 'less abusive,' though he does not diagnose that as exhaustion of vocabulary. Also 'there is less regimentalism'—that is, no cloak-rolling—and believes that they, the officers, have come to learn practical warfare at last,



and begun 'to understand us more, and we them'; in fact, all are on the high road of *rapprochement* to that cordiality of relationship whose warmth should be felt even in sultry South Africa.

## CHAPTER VI

### ON DUTIES

**B**Y all that is sacred in the name of Geography, what could the Corporal find in South Africa to induce him to write an Essay on Wind? We want to know what his duties are, and meander through this involved and worthless chaff of thought to find a grain of fact, and find him 'lying on his stomach twenty-seven miles from Bloemfontein' (this is not a geographical location of his alimentary organs) 'due north-west in the absence of maps, perhaps a dash of east in it, or possibly west'—so accurately do we know our movements—'out on grazing duty; above the Modder River, which here is not wanting in rocks and bushes and a sort of African prettiness—for the everlasting monotonous Veldt.' He is very severe

on the Veldt. He is lying, under the sunniest of skies, on it, amongst the ants, and yet can rhapsodize on 'the wind rustling through the dried grass around my head with the sound of the sublimate of winds in the trees.' Yes, we know that sentimentality. It comes from explorations in the region of bathos, as Byron says.

'Scientifically,' he moralizes, under the inspiration of ant-bites presumably—'scientifically approached, it is conjecturable that this æolian chord, stimulating fear amidst all the blessings of Nature, is analogous to the Mummy at the Feast, as Dr. Watts would have said'—but in bad verse—'Wind is a spiritual anodyne ; my horse seems to prefer it to grazing'—prefers it to Veldt grass, and wisely. 'But murmuring wind, above all things, stimulates the memory and, through the memory, excites that pleasurable but measured yearning that is strong in the ratio of potential heart's desire.' All this out of one grass chord, and that 'of the simplest'—C natural, Major, no doubt.

'The grazing hour at Home ! Think of it !

Sleek kine, green fields, thick pastures, leafy hedges and shady trees and babbling brooks.' We must read up the symptoms of nostalgia. 'But this Veldt, bare, interminable, and dry, deserted, yet sounding the homelike æolian chord! It makes one shudder,' spite of the heat. 'Why is the best music nothing much more than an augmented, amplified, constructed, dissected, reconstructed chord?'—a damnable iteration, in fact. . . . "This gentle breath of Nature's murmuring choir" is somewhat of a fraud; in truth, it shares its musical honours with that which it strikes; with dry Veldt grasses. It rises and falls, crescendos and diminuendos on the grass, and without the grass is soundless, but there strikes sublime and touching harmonies, never far above nor below the stave, but plays and replays its unambitious theme; damnably iterates, it seems, on reference to the Diary, for two hours, 'and yet is ever new, is ever an amplification of the first theme, a sensuous growth, an emotional augmentation, a multiplied vibration of heart-strings, such as only tears can relieve. And

the inward yearnings cry aloud to know, What is this? Where are one's senses soaring, and why?' At which point the overflowing soul apparently comes back again to earth, dry grass, and ant-hills; back to prosy life, where musical themes are not amplified nor varied but replicaed with all the dull, gray chill of monotonous repetition. 'Why, many times in a little life, do we meditate in the music of the wind to our sorrow? Why does the heart expand, the soul's lyre vibrate, the senses quiver, and the imagination soaring, bear the spirit again to that celestial Rubicon, and mangle it once more against that stubborn, unanswerable interrogative?' My friends, we here below, in Africa or Anywhere, are listeners at Nature's grand orchestra, playing Creation's Symphony, and, not being qualified to play those instruments of her making, have no title to a seat amongst the instrumentalists and therefore know little. Perhaps one day we may become a little more intimate in that quarter, may study Nature's scores a little, so to speak; may find therein, possibly, some answer to the

agonized interrogative. Meanwhile the orchestra will play in Nature's hall, to our delight, Creation's masterpiece entitled 'The Universe,' which one day, be assured, will come to a full triumphant close on the dominant. Admission to the Entertainment is free to all, on condition that one and all will listen and let others listen. That ought to be enough for the time being.

'Washed my shirt in the Modder—also myself.'

Ah! the Corporal is on earth once more, and all we have tangible out of his wandering, windy essay is that grazing lasted two hours, and seems dangerous to the reading public. So now, Corporal, having patiently awaited your good pleasure, shall we get once more on our feet and to work?

'Willingly.'

At E——, O.R.C., the Diary is very precise in many matters connected with patrolling the line and its neighbourhood, daily coming in touch with patrols from the

south, daily receiving telegrams advising 'presence of the enemy, broken through Commander-in-Chief's line' and raiding west or east of us ; daily have to go out in search of these, daily fail to find them. This and the performance of bivouac duties of the usual horse and man feeding kind pall a little, a sentry shot through the shoulder one dark night being the only diversion of interest. Very unpicturesque—in fact, so much so that we must embellish it with further extracts. We line patrollers were twenty, it seems, under a Sergeant, who, in his turn, was subordinate to a militia officer in command of forty of the choicest spirits of that branch of the service. Except a little chilled that in arriving here we lost our kit, tent, and blankets, and had to sleep out in several degrees of frost 'till they are replaced,' the Corporal is rendered facetious to merriment in his entries, no doubt rejoiced at being away from his officers. He describes his surroundings with impressionistic niggling thus :

'The chief topographical features of this

place are the railway, interminable north-and south-ward, the veldt, interminable in all directions lying in a horizontal plane and the blue vault of heaven'—reputed by theologians to be interminable in *all* directions. 'During patrols we buy at the farm-houses bread at from two and six to three shillings a loaf—size, the usual English; eggs from the Kaffir kraal at from a halfpenny to a penny each—size, according to hen; butter half a crown a pound; honey three shillings for a bucketful.' Divers prices and divers measurements! 'Men sit round their tents'—we had tents there, it appears, an unusual luxury. 'Sentries patrol railway, horses graze or rest, officer commanding'—he of the militia—like the eternal sky, 'over all.' This O.C., it appears, was an arch incongruity. Wore out there on the Veldt a gold-rimmed eyeglass; was, in fact, a 'gold-rimmed individual, and somewhat of an enigma; evidently familiar with all purchasable luxuries; living here, by virtue of his rank, in solitary aloofness and on camp fare, in command of forty of the roughest.' No 'gentles' in the



militia, apparently. 'Sits at the moment of writing silently studying the ashes of an extinct camp-fire' — elbows on knees, no doubt, head between fists. Poor, solitary man! Seems at times too, 'disposed to fraternize with us, but does not dare.' Something between an Achilles and Diogenes, what with him and his lonely tent combined. . . . The Corporal once more at a later date passes E——, 'that miserable spot,' and wonders if the gilded patrician still commands there his half-company of —shire dregs. 'Poor devil!' he soliloquizes, 'was it good enough, gilding and all, to be so patriotic?'

Altogether, it seems most blessed to have been a trooper, for the Corporal, who is never optimistic, looks upon his experience, of the whole duty of a line-patroller as a sort of armed picnic, even including solitary patrols of a pitch-black night in an enemy's country, and emphasizes the building of a field-oven and the roasting therein by the culinary genius of the party of two legs of mutton and one turkey, 'the first roast meat

in South Africa to many of us'—toothsome succulency to jaded veteranhood. 'But there! There we were away from our officers and no premium was put upon living the way best suited to efficiency in our duties, only a sergeant being over us, and over him a gold-rimmed militiaman, who, by the way, in his splendid isolation, forgot to entrench himself against all the possible eventualities which did not come, but allowed us to entrench ourselves—though we didn't sleep the sounder for that, having unentrenched already slept with porcine oblivion the sleep of the well-fed—and flattered us by entrenching himself too, to the mixed delight of the general commanding the district,' who on a subsequent visit of inspection 'orders him and his and us and ours to move and re-entrench ourselves some quarter of a mile up the line' and abandon our old, 'carefully thought out earthworks'—no doubt too, our demi-lunes, escarps, counterscarps, epaulements, bastions and demi-bastions, which our genius for fortification had designed—to eventualities or the enemy that didn't come.

Meanwhile we did not, we and our sergeant, re-entrench ourselves, seeing that we were relieved and rejoined our company northward—our company and bad language, and no roast meat ; though ‘before completing our duty here, it seems, we manfully finished at one sitting the bucketful of honey, as we did not see the force of leaving it for the relief party,’ charitables that we ‘gentles’ were !

But before actually rejoining northwards, there are two duties at which it befell the Corporal’s men to assist, the first of very sad significance now.

‘On the Veldt, some mile or so out of Bloemfontein, on the 24th of May, in the year 1900, about half a mile of khaki uniforms, drawn up under the blazing African winter sky, faces the one piece of solitary colour in the otherwise monochrome landscape. The Union Jack is bright anywhere. Here, against the worn grass and colourless uniforms of even the General and his staff—at home so brilliant—it looks doubly bright. Therefore it is a conspicuously efficient

saluting - point on this naturally perfect review-ground.'

'At the bugle-call the khaki line breaks up with machine-like precision from the right, and, wheeling, passes the saluting-point to the strength of one regiment of Yeomanry, some half-dozen batteries of artillery, and a couple of dozen or so battalions of infantry, plus a goodly regiment of slouch-hatted scouts. And, to the tune of massed infantry bands, wheels again and yet again, until, forming up on its original ground once more facing the bunting, but now in column of squadrons, batteries and battalions—waits.' Honour to whom honour is due, Corporal! The Yeomanry led the march-past, all in a silence save that 'mysterious rustling sound that accompanies mounted men on the soft, noiseless Veldt.'

'Once more the bugle sounds. The whole line moves forward like one man, halts midway between the saluting - point and the handful of civilians that have braved recent events in Bloemfontein, goes through the General Salute, and, with a unanimity which

makes signals absurd, raises every headgear, from the humblest private's army contract helmet to the General's selected topee, to arm's length, and gives three rousing cheers, that echo even on the flat and barren Free State. It is a mere formal, cut-and-dried ceremony, but the most phlegmatic spectator cannot go through with it unmoved. It is the Eighty-First Birthday of Queen Victoria, celebrated in the capital of an Enemy's Country. Ceremony or no ceremony, all else in it is lost in the thought of one Lady seven thousand miles away at home in England.'

'Then the different units break up and file off independently from the pomp of soldiering to the hard realities of camp accommodation, short rations, and other glories of active service. So ends the first Queen's Birthday celebrated in this new possession for the First Time.'

And for the last, Corporal !

But here is something less regretful :

'A double line of infantry two deep in the Market Place encloses a space some eighty

yards square. All again is khaki. There is a band in this space, and a flagstaff, with a motley-coloured bundle at the top, the blue sky again over all. The Military Governor rides in with his escort of Yeomanry. The troops present arms, the band plays a strain, the Governor faces eastward, and addresses himself eastward, and reads in clear, confident tones that: "Whereas certain territories, known heretofore as the Orange Free State, have been conquered by Her Majesty's Forces, and it has seemed expedient"—in short, to turn them into the Orange River Colony and a Crown Colony and British Possession withal—I, the Governor, have my little share in this history-making by reading proclamations to the necessary effect, and, having done it very nicely, one of my aides-de-camp pulls a string in the vicinage of that aforementioned flagstaff, and out rolls in all its splendour a most noble sample of that most noble flag, the British Royal Standard. The band plays the national anthem, the troops salute, the crowded balconies from houses bounding the square

seem to quiver with wavings of buntings and cheerings of cheers. The Military Governor faces eastward, salutes, and retires, followed by his escort of Yeomanry, whom he dismisses finally with pretty compliments.

Why does the Military Governor face eastward? Whom does he address? Whom does he salute? Surrounded by double ranks of his Conquering Army, whom does the Conqueror salute?

Simply the Conquered!

There stand there in the eastward face of that space, in higgledy-piggledy order, some forty or fifty civilians. Men of all ages, some few young and dandified, some middle-aged, but many old, gray, and bearded and venerable; venerable-looking even in the well-cherished clothes of antiquated and forgotten fashion, cherished for wear on great occasions. Is this then a great occasion to thee, O Conquered? . . . They return the Governor's salute respectfully; some endeavour to cheer, some to look pleased; but none can conceal the incongruity of their position nor its bitterness.

The Corporal as one of thirty picked men to escort the Military Governor, finishes his little share in this history-making here, and marches at ease after all this victorious pomp and ceremony back to camp—full, no doubt, of all the pride of his conquering race. Too full, probably, to notice the Cemetery ‘which we have to pass on our way, and where the parson,’ too busy to attend pageantries of war, ‘is burying our men at the rate of forty and fifty a day. Our men, or what *were* our men, lying outside at the Cemetery gates on stretchers, stitched in blankets, waiting their turn for burial, while the bearers while away the time with the easiest diversion at hand.’ The Corporal is evidently too full of pride of race, to remark here that yet another Conqueror is having a little victorious ceremony of his own—one Death.

It seems that before not so very long this conquered country was giving us the spectacle of warfare again, within very reasonable distance of this Ceremonial of Victory, too. And it seems we had to be very vigilant



withal over these conquered ones. For instance, the Corporal, revisiting Bloemfontein, is at garrison work and, in company with other Yeomen, trench-digging, and on examining guard.

An examining guard, it should be understood, is one of a cordon of guard-posts 'drawn round this town with spartan severity against the in- or egress of non-combatants,' or even against combatants, for that matter, seeing that we were within hearing of 'gun-fire' of some adjacent engagement, and, in fact, were busily entrenching ourselves, fearing attack. The Corporal finds examining duties the most miserable in existence. He is not even diverted by the eternal feminine, exemplified by a 'lady endeavouring to foist an antiquated and known to be wholly worthless pass made out to a man, upon an unsophisticated and bland-looking sentry.' As Corporal of the Guard, he is called up to arbitrate, 'having to be very exact' with gunfire within earshot; finds the lady expensively dressed in the best of possible taste, drawn by unusually smart ponies in

the sprucest of vehicles ; points out to her the discrepancies of her own sex and that of the person described in the pass ; reminds her of what she already knows, that it is impossible to cross that imaginary line, 'more adamant,' in mixed metaphor, 'than walls of brass' ; and that it is also the simplest of simple things for any loyalist to receive a valid pass at the gracious and courteous hands of no less a dignitary than the Provost-Marshal himself. 'I concluded'—I, the Corporal, did—'that she was a lady.' Having to be firm, the lady lost her temper with the Corporal, and used language more indignant than fit for the ears of 'the Young Person' ; by which token the Corporal concludes his first estimate of her ladyhood to have been just. He soliloquizes, 'Oh, woman, woman ! was it another of your colossal bluffs, or the arch-concentration of guilelessness ?' and wisely leaves the question unanswered.

And now the Corporal says final farewell to Bloemfontein, for which one would think he had a penchant, whereas he describes it as a 'doghole.'

Though we have seen he has already written in the Transvaal, we have not accompanied his grand entry there nor referred to his observations *en route*, which his bizarre imagination really makes a little out of the ordinary.

He makes his journey by train, and counts it for dulness that 'blown-up culverts and bridges,' after those peaceful intentions of the Brother Boer? 'have grown monotonous.' Burnt farms, wrecked railway-trains, and the scenes of recent engagements, pall in their quantity, while the frequency 'of rough wayside graves' has also cloyed, epicure that he is. The possibility of being blown off the line, even, does not satisfy him, and he writes ironically of the Transvaal thus: 'The South African tourist will in his itinerary have noticed that the watersheds of the Transvaal differ from those of the late Free State in so much as that they contain water.' Ha! 'The advantages accruing from this fortuitous circumstance are obvious. The abominate and desolate plain is broken by verdure, foliage, and cultivation; and those cool glades and shady

groves, which form the stock-in-trade of Arcadias and Utopias, are to be found there in becomingly modest quantity.' That is, oases occur in this abomination of desolation.

He passes through the fringe of the great gold region, that 'district which is going to find the future world in Dividends,' and, approaching it in the dark, is weirdly impressed by the blaze of electric light which bursts therefrom 'over the otherwise opaque blackness of lonely African night.' He dismisses Pretoria as a pretty town with its profusion of trees and flowers and its runnels of water, and, passing the spot where his Company received its baptism of fire, notices that there still lies there a token of that baptism, 'the billet of one of our bullets, once a Boer, now a gruesome, unspeakable, unburied thing. Things were so serious we could not bury at all.' He reaches his Company again, receives that cordial official greeting for rejoining already mentioned, and is back again to duty with a column pursuing Erasmus or some such commander.

‘The duties of Yeomanry on the march here are scouting and patrolling—no agreeable job in the Bush veldt and rugged country of the Northern Transvaal. In addition to this we have, in the presence of the enemy, ‘to ride up to kopjes and disclose positions—that is, draw fire; literally, make ourselves into living targets.’ A necessary, we presume, but also not an agreeable job. ‘This is mainly the work done by all Yeomanry, with the addition of finding mounted pickets. Pickets, it should be stated, or pickets and Cossack posts, are formed when camp is pitched by bodies, of perhaps four or more men, enclosing the camp in a circle of about one mile or one mile and a half radius. Each picket should be in communication with the other on its right and left flank; each picket posts a sentry who, on the enemy’s approach, warns the non-commissioned officer in charge, whose duty it is to alarm the camp if possible; having done which he has the option of making his escape back to camp or remaining where he is, to be honourably shot or gracefully

taken prisoner. Escorting convoys is little more than a moving picket on the flanks, front and rear of an advancing column. The safety of camp and column depend in great degree upon the vigilance and intelligence of these pickets, and the Yeomanry have been much used in this duty. Realizing the isolation which it entails to small bodies, and even individuals, and the difficulties or obstacles in evading an enemy of superior strength'—it is one of the sours of the profession of arms, eh, Corporal?—'without missing the object of locating him and determining his strength, one is justified in assuming that the frequent use made of the Yeomanry in this department is testimony to their possessing a modicum of soldierly qualities.'

To serve your country, to obey your officers (swearing or not), to fear God and love mankind, are duties which, added to the above, complete the whole obligations, moral and military which we can extract from the Corporal's deposition.

Apropos of that word 'deposition,' it must

not be thought that the Corporal has met his death in the service of his country. He has come out of it fairly well, one might say, or wonderfully well, considering how near he has been to the opportunity of deposing for the last time. Still, that opportunity will be good experience with which to face his appearance in print.

## CHAPTER VII

### HOSPITALS AND MEN

**I**T is quite clear that military hospitals have been the cause of more suffering to friends of soldiers at home than to soldiers themselves at the front. Anent them we have read in newspapers of revelations that make the whole civilized world shudder. Poor civilized world! You need, with your ultra-sensitive organism and your hysterio-philic editors, far more sympathy—for the afflictions of this criminal and culpable mismanagement of your hospitals and your sick soldiers, while you sat comfortably writing in secure luxurious niches of the social arrangement where war is not, nor likely to be—than your poor fighting men, who were at the front in the main, smitten with all the pestilential comfort, luxury, and alleviation to



suffering that unlimited generosity or human ingenuity and devoted scientific skill can procure. That 'criminality' upon which newspapers are unwontedly eloquent is truly of those magnitudes which they would have us believe. In fact, having been at the war, and in hospital there, we, after consultation with the Corporal, feel it to be rather understated, and hasten to give assurances that these magnitudes are of a dimension only to be appreciated by retirement to a distance of not less than seven thousand miles—say at the distance London is from Pretoria. The Corporal assures us on his honour that only through the hysteriophile visions of that former great metropolis is he able so much as to make a mental image of that notorious Colossus, the Hospital Scandal. But then, what we are learning from this war is past all belief. It is at home amidst all the advantages of civilized peace that we die lingering deaths of starvation, of chagrin, or of shock at the misery round us; or sometimes of the ridicule of those highly sensitive ones around us. We die thus unnoticed,

unmourned and unavenged — unavenged, O hysteriophiles ! for it is of a vengeance a crime, while in the exigencies of war and the epidemics of war there is no extenuation of circumstance that shall prevent the whole civilized stay-at-home world from getting up and shuddering. Luckily, it shudders only at the infrequent horrors of war ; else should we have a new *fin-de-siècle*, devastating, shuddering-pestilence. We, after further consultation with the Corporal, have come to the solemn conclusion that we have shuddered more at Metropolitan sights in one short month of civilian life than in the whole thirteen spent at the theatre of war. But then the Corporal, in spite of his involved articulation, has the seeing eye, which goes a little below the superficies of things, and, moreover, is not blinded to civilian observation by his military experience. He reminds us, by the way, that we are wandering, and desires that we will retrace our steps to the Diary.

‘ In war the little graces, ceremonials and punctilios upon which so much stress is laid

in social life are conspicuously rare. We congregate, it is true, in war ; but we dispense with the veneer of civilized gregation, for it will not stand the rude knocks, be it never so thick, that it is there destined to encounter. The fighting man discards his social degrees when fighting, and becomes, as he is at heart always, a predatory animal, and what difference or degree there is in him is then of that purely animal sort.' The Corporal here, with commendable candour, makes no superior claims for himself. On this score he reflects, rather, that 'it is better to be a genuine animal than a veneered sham,' and inwardly and humbly prays that in the future he may have sense enough, on returning to civilized life, to get the best polish he can on the natural article rather than attempt to hide its asperities or blemishes with veneer. And perhaps he is right ; for social veneer won't stand any but the gentlest treatment, and we don't all get that here below.

Having established this standpoint for himself, the Corporal, for the time being, with his own predatory instincts in abeyance,

gives over his leisure in hospital to studying it in others. Of the individual in khaki now fighting our country's battles, he has been admonished by the poet to take him as he finds him. The hypercritical Corporal accepts the admonition, but demurs to the poetry. This is how the Corporal finds the man in khaki.

'On hospital train No.—anything up to 5 — the Company consists of a carriage full of wounded veterans, all heroes, no doubt, all foul-mouthed, coarse-minded, and coarser mannered; cannot by any known means control the chronic soldierly expectorative habit even in a hospital car. Good soldiers, without a doubt, proven excellent fighting machines, but abominably bad travelling companions'—to a sick Corporal — more especially one, it seems, a reservist of a famous regiment of Fusiliers, an Irishman, to wit, who seems to be the leader of that which acts as constant irritation to the Corporal's fever-strung nerves.

'Our progress being hampered through blowing up of permanent way'—*impermanent* way, surely—'we stand all night on the

same spot, the hospital staff, meanwhile, making things up to us by all available means to our comfort, much to the approval of our veterans. Stout being liberally served out to those well enough to drink it, and the foreseen curative effects of this ration upon the dangerously ill falling far short of reality, the Fusilier's avowal of willingness to remain on that same spot, for, under existing libatory conditions, an indefinite period, touches a responsive chord in the breasts of that carriage-load, and calls forth an unqualified approval of his expressed sentiments.' Stout was for convalescents only, 'but all malingersers,' says the Diary, 'are convalescent *d'occasion*. During the absence of the Sister, our car'—or ward, as we call them in the faculty — 'containing, perhaps, twenty - five occupied beds, and possibly four or five really sick men, is the scene of impromptu football matches, mimic imitations of the famous engagements of the war, illustrated with pillows and bed-clothing, and bating nothing in realism from the genuine article, even surpassing reality with the known precision of

history.' The muscular energy of convalescents is exhaustible, however. We have intervals of suspended strife, when the vocal organs avail themselves of the opportunity for exercise. In the rendering by convalescents of that famous ballad of the Sixties, 'John Brown's a Soldier in the Army of the South,' the Corporal suspects an attempt to produce from a given number of voices a record volume of sound, and considers the complete experiment, viewed in that light, as eminently successful, and no doubt wishes John Brown would obtain his discharge from the army of the South, if only on the ground of superannuation. But the vocal exercises, too, have limits of duration, so that we get, comparatively speaking, periods of subdued corporeal irritation, filled in by monologues from our Fusilier friend, 'the most bucolic invalid that ever malingered, and the worst wit that Ireland ever turned out — the idol, though, of his fellow-malingerers, who hang in open-mouthed transportation to anticipate him in the first laugh at his own jokes, but always failing.'

Poor Corporal! he lies there one of five really sick men, racked with fever, a 'mass of receiving-points for everything that irritates,' too ill, even, to take his eyes off the two bunks at his feet, occupied in the direct line of his only reposeful vision by 'two arch-expectorators,' while his ears are fully occupied by unwilling attention paid to a unanimous discussion, or, better, apostrophization, of Beer. One elevated hero tells of a friend who can drink twelve pints of beer out of hand, and, speaking of him with a becoming sense of awed reverence, is for the moment, on the strength of his cordial relationship with such a libatory Titan, the 'cynosure of a respectful silence,' the Corporal getting a moment's aural rest, anyhow. Another, apparently to challenge the monopoly of so much homage, timorously, and a little irrelevantly, suggests that a pint of beer sucked through a straw will inebriate one. He immediately becomes the centre of ill-disguised derision, and subsides accordingly into obscure and venerable homage once more. 'We take thirty hours to do thirty

miles—*pas grande chose, mais la guerre.*' Thirty hours of this to sick men, and probably 'gentles' among them. But, nevertheless, the apotheosis of Beer seems to have its apogee, and that being reached, the talk turns to fighting and what we have done therein. We talk, some of us heroes, 'at the double, with unflagging animation, for two hours solid.' The subject is ourselves and our regiment in battle, and, like good soldiers, we apprehend every opportunity to point out that *we* and *ours* were in such and such an engagement, and should the argument from too great a unanimity of opinion flag a little, we snap at an apropos word from no shorter distance than the whole length of the ward, and, with that chance word as our text, expound voluminously upon that engagement, but principally upon *our* share therein. By these and other means we rise into the 'glowing temperature of reminiscence, first personal and possessive pronouns plural. It is all *we* and *our* then, and, after all, we and our are but modest *I* and *mine.*'

Poor, poor Corporal!



Deal with him gently, O reader ; he is ill of a fever. His Diary, then, hereabouts should be salted a little to taste before final consumption. Still, in justice to him, though he attempts to strike a little with the 'biting edge of satire,' we have never—no, not even in fever—found him otherwise than a pious and humble servitor of Truth. He certainly is at times very severe, though.

Listen : 'Full' he finds the hospital 'of malingerers, thieves, and some sick men,' and gives a sublimated example. 'A mounted infantryman, from — no matter where — to be accurate, the next bed to myself'—who by stealth consumes the other patients' rations, is the picture of rude health—we can imagine it—'and is tardily enough warned to leave hospital. By some mysterious agency that warning sends up his temperature. He is detained next day and put to bed on plain milk diet. The diets are three : Plain milk (milk and stimulants) ; light diet (bread, mince, and pudding) ; and convalescent diet (normal food, of excellent quality for a healthy man, and plenty of it).

The Sister's and doctors' backs being turned, this warrior chases the tedium of his healthful sufferings with noisy games at cards and pillowfights, and gratifies his equestrian tastes with steeplechasing about the ward, displaying agility, marvellous, even in normal health, particularly in nipping back to bed on the Sister's approach. What I write I write after seeing with *mes propres yeux*. The second day after returning to bed this patient obtained, by means best known to himself, and consumed at each meal during the day, one portion of *all three diets*. . . . I have the strongest circumstantial evidence that my neighbour also saw fit during my illness to appropriate my tobacco. Though circumstantial evidence is not conclusive, I make this accusatory entry, after what there is conclusive evidence about, with little compunction and much confidence.' He was very thorough, this mounted infantryman, wasn't he, Corporal? 'The hospitals in South Africa are too good and too strong an inducement to the gratitude of malingerers of the above stamp.'

The Diary proceeds, after some little interval for the exigencies of enteric fever, with the Diarist in a normal bodily temperature. His mental temperature must be judged by his entries. 'The company of eighty convalescents and other bad characters, who did not care to face the Front, is now no more congenial to a real convalescent than it was formerly odious to a sick man.'

He grows laconic: 'Armies are used in war. The possibility of war is the gestation of armies. Peace is the greatest of human blessings. It enables us stealthily to prepare for war. Be friendly with your neighbour. Love him, and leave undone no preparations to fight him. Be ready always to attack him when you have him at a disadvantage. It is humane so to do. This is the Art of Peace, and the maturity of standing armies.'

'It is the function of an army to fight.'

'As in fighting one may get killed, it is considered dangerous to fight. We all fear death'—'gentles' and all—'some of us are terrified by it, though it is the dispensation of God. There is one thing stronger than

death which keeps us morally healthy : it is the Fear of God. . . . Apparently the British soldier knows no God, or, knowing Him, does not fear Him, else he would not steal and malingering. Knowing God, the British soldier fears Him less than he fears his Sergeant-Major. Hence discipline. It replaces the fear of God. It makes men face Death ; not fearlessly, but they face it. From this,' says the Corporal, who now comes down, as it were, from his judicial pedestal and mixes with us in a friendly, controversial spirit, 'deductions on the Utility of the Futile may be drawn. The Utility of Futility is disciplinarian. For instance, it is futile to search for evidences of courage in a coward. Cowardice disciplined is the next best substitute. The volunteer is brave in danger through the Fear of God. With him, then, discipline is a futile and abominable excess. The military system of England is the High Priest of discipline. The ultra-futile disciplinarianism in the volunteer Yeomanry is now obvious. Might it not be profitable in the future to put forth inducements to the naturally God-

fearing to fight our battles for us, and to make it worth their while?' Well, really, if what the Corporal says is true—and we have never had occasion to doubt that it is—it would perhaps be almost worth while to consider the propriety of such inducements.

'I have seen much of the British Foot-soldier,' continues the Diary, 'more particularly *ex cathedra*, and here in sorrow more than in anger I feel bound, as a patriot, to conclude that the sight is not edifying.' Generalizing, the Corporal, far from finding edification, finds 'an unbeautiful, blasphemous, expectorating animal, who lives for beer and sleep, and, knowing that every *quo* must have its *quid*, pays therefor in the currency of obedience. As he is foul-mouthed and depraved off duty, so is he a pattern soldier on parade and the battlefield. In the depths of his unbeautiful nature you will look for Courage in Battle and find Fear on Parade. Most gladly can one turn from this painful generality to the few exceptions—the better men. How they must suffer by their associa-

tions, and how unquestionably are they heroes that they do not flinch, not under fire, but under the greater ordeal of their associations! From these the British army is supplied with a staff of admirable non-commissioned officers, who alone—and to their credit—are capable of subjugating that unruly horde. Soldiers ask each other in jest if they enlisted against alternative starvation, and the affirmative answer is, more often than not, the truth that proverbially lies in that form of humour. I'—the Corporal—'have been told by soldiers that, on enlistment, their parents have forbidden them thenceforward to enter their own homes in uniform. The British uniform carries a stigma with it, then? Why? Because enlistment is a last resource of the submerged against extinction. Gaol to them is a misfortune; enlistment a disgrace.' Really, the Corporal puts the matter very pertinently, what with his God-fearing and Discipline-fearing men—in fact, almost makes one believe he is holding a brief for the former, so we will progress again in the Diary.

Happily, he finds them not all alike. There was, for instance, 'the Old Soldier, as I christened him, on my left when first I got into hospital, who could not eat, who, although at other times he could, on his own assurance, have eaten the leg of a horse, had no appetite at all now, in spite of which he consumed milk and corn-flour half-hourly during the day. There was hope, however, for his appetite, as, the matron having gone to lunch, he is seen surreptitiously returning from the pantry, wiping his mouth.' The Old Soldier, it seems, was very kind to the Corporal, 'used to attend to my little wants, and prattle in the best-intentioned way of his doings "up there"—pointing *south-west* with his pipe-stem, meaning Pretoria, which lay *north-east*.' Poor Old Soldier! He thought to get invalided home to his wife and family. He was a Reservist, but had to return to the front, where he may be yet—whence, in fact, he may never return. It is sad, because there is always a gap, however obscure a one, whence such as he come. Then there was the Irishman 'on my left, who was an ab-

stainer from beer, and though a compensator in bad language, his intentions—and, for that matter, his performance, too—were of the best. He was convalescing, and assured me with the bland complacency of conviction, and a brogue that one might have cut, that I had “enterrrc.” Assured me next morning, with the more bland urbanity of forgetfulness, that I had *not* “enterrrc.”’

‘The hospitals,’ reiterates the Corporal, with the emphasis of one desiring justice to be done, ‘are too good when they offer readily accepted asylum to gentlemen of the stamp of’—the three-ration man, to be brief. ‘Yet it seems to have been necessary to exploit a Royal Commission to inquire into those abuses, of which I’—the Corporal—‘saw nothing, and which, on my soul, I believe, in point of virtual fact, never existed.’ Perhaps then, the Commission will arraign the hospitals on the subject of three-ration men. But enough of three-ration men; they have fought England’s battles well, whether from Fear of God or of Sergeants-Major.

To the Corporal again, then, in hospital,



at a spot on the extreme point of a railway-line branching off the central trunk line northwards, and well in the enemy's country, subject to, be it remembered, all the inconveniences of such a situation. A tin church of quite respectable dimensions is the extemporized hospital. 'I go through the following diagnosis: Principal medical officer, at 11.45 a.m., *loquitur* gruffly: "What's the matter? Put out your tongue. Fever. Take those"—giving pills. "Go to the Church House." Diagnosis finished at eleven hours forty-five minutes and four seconds a.m. At twelve o'clock I am here, *in bed* for the first time since February the fifteenth.' Poor 'gentles'! 'In church'—also, perhaps, for the first time since the date before-mentioned. 'Sister in official nursing uniform of steel-blue print dress, white apron, cap and cuffs—the most spotlessly pure—and scarlet tippet, looks quite charming.' Only charming? Bah! ungrateful Corporal! Is not a sight of one of his own countrywomen to the battered British soldier as the sun is to the earth? Ingrate that thou art—unap-

preciative withal. If thou hast gratitude, stand and speak it now, for if there are angels on earth, and if angels come here a-ministering, surely these red-tipped ones are they. Yes, yes ; we know, Corporal, as well as thou that they come, most of them, not from heaven, but from England, and, speaking quite *ex co-laboribus*, we feel inclined to approve their choice of locality. But might they not too, be ministering angels there? Were they not all young and beautiful-looking to thy starved eyes? And though we know full well also, that the inward and spiritually angelic is not glaringly manifest in the outwardly civilized habit, yet we take these as thou foundest them, Corporal. And how foundest thou them? Thou knowest full well ; gentle in manner as the turtle of apostolic symbolism, yet firm in purpose as the eagle ; brave in all the gruesome horrors of hospitals as Fortitude herself, yet softly, warmly sympathetic, even to melting, to scalding gratitude, the heart of coldest, hardest stone ; enduring—— But why attempt to belittle their worth in mere words? Art not

thou thyself, Corporal, and many thousands like thee, that have been hesitating on the fringe of the "Valley of Death,"—art not thou in health the most more-than-eloquent living monument of the multifarious virtues, unlimited worth, and ill-recompensed labours of these, thy for-thee self-expatriated sisters? . . . To his credit, let us say it, the Corporal cordially answers all the above questions in emphatic affirmative,—in fact, goes even a little further in wishing us to include the Medical Staff. But our language, paltry as it is, fails us. We include them cordially, with humble, but never-to-be-forgotten gratitude.

‘Two or three beds from me,’ the Diarist proceeds under the same date, ‘lies a delirious soldier, fighting his battles deliriously o’er again against Boers of delirium.’ The Corporal, fevered as he was, slept that night no wink till daylight, and the hours had grown big. ‘Had I been able to sleep, I could not have done so till the passing of delirious fights against illusory foes gave way to snoring and silence. On waking

again in the morning, I asked how this patient was,' and was answered laconically, 'In the mortuary.'

N.B.—The snoring was the death-rattle ; the silence—Death.

And this thy first night in hospital?—suffering, Corporal, like the defunct, from the same cause of defection, enteric? And many thousands in like case with thyself. Truly thou and those thousands have need of sympathy, skill, and ministering angels as well as physic; and, if the truth were known, perhaps having all these but the last, one might shorten one's prescriptions here below a little. And again, Corporal, thou and they have need for gratitude to whomsoever thou and they severally consider it due, for that Anodyne of Indifference that seems to go in inseparable company with the affairs of war; else, under such-like experiences as the above, had it ended with thee and they by means other than fever—by Terror, to wit.

The charges brought by the Corporal

against the hospitals are these. Imprimis: the said 'hospitals are too good.' Secondly, 'we patients get too much to eat,' but have the option of leaving what we don't want. Thirdly, 'we are waited upon hand and foot by a band of ministering angels, selected, one would imagine, in great measure, for charm of physical presence.' We are epitomizing the Diary. Fourthly, 'we are in the hands of the most skilled surgeons and eminent physicians that that most noble profession of Medicine can produce. Fifthly, we are supplied, those of us who can smoke, with the wherewithal to smoke, even having a choice between tobacco and cigarettes in many instances, and in other instances'—a serious charge—'choice of brand in either.' Sixthly, 'We are supplied with books, newspapers, and journals *ad nauseam*,'—the Corporal being evidently a man of such fine literary taste. Seventhly, and editorially, we have ample warm and clean clothing. Eighthly, and in continuation, there are, in the hospital system in South Africa, provided comforts, bodily and mental, innumer-

able ; as witness, the presentation to each patient in the hospital trains of a bag containing sleeping-suit, hair brush and comb, soap and towel, pair of slippers, all of good quality, and from the moment of presentation that patient's absolute property. Nor in the mental line is anything left undone that can overcome all the most minute worries or vexations which retard, so much, recovery from wounds and disease. Ninthly and lastly, these charges above, such as they are, are brought, and are capable of substantiation, against the whole hospital system of South African warfare, and that, if there were charges of quite another kind, they were but a drop in the ocean of so mighty a System ; and, moreover, had they been in themselves a respectably-sized sea—to continue the metaphor—they were and are justifiable by envioning circumstances, and therefore no rebutment to the Corporal's charges as above. The Corporal speaks in this matter of the hospitals, such as he found them, on behalf of the Yeomanry at large ; and it must not detract from the force of his ac-

cusation to remind the impartial observer that there were 'gentles' in the Yeomanry who know the adversity of good living very thoroughly.

No wonder, on reference again to the Diary, we find subsequent return to duty 'a return to nightmare. The ground harder to sleep on than ever before, blankets thinner. Breakfast of dry bread and lukewarm, half-boiled, sickly coffee is neither palatable nor nourishing,' nor for that matter are 'parsimoniously distributed, insufficient and inedible rations good allies wherewith to struggle against the after-effects of enteric.'

But the hospital system has been enough accused by others, so we need not hear the Corporal any further, except to say that he does not perhaps make a good patient, else why this? 'Visited to-day by a lady in severe khaki and severer pince-nez—evidently a visit of benevolence. She addressed me as if speaking to a sucking babe. She is obviously a shining light amongst the philanthropic, and I had great difficulty not to insult her.' Or, when he says: 'Conva-

lescence in hospital is a succession of days passed all on the highest plane—or should it be lowest?—of dulness incarnate; varied by three excitements of the wildest magnitude—breakfast, dinner, and tea.’ And: ‘Men in hospital are like caged lions; sleeping the tedium of life away till meal-time, the proximity of which in men and lions is measured by the ratio of animal restlessness.’

Altogether, what with philanthropic busybodies, tedium, and gauging mortal sickness, hospital life in South African war-time is not all honey. But it is just as near to it as the hospital system can make it:



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HIATUS

WHEREVER possible we have, in our editorial task, endeavoured to advance in a chronological progress through the Corporal's Diary. Though we have at times found it necessary, in giving cohesion to kindred events occurring at different times and places, to skip several hundred hours in time and miles in space, we find ourselves to have pushed steadily through these involved pages to the Hiatus, lying between the month of September, 1900, and January, 1901. We are editors only, and the correct editorial attitude towards a hiatus is one of dignified but severe aloofness. Correct in all things, we shall, of course, take this attitude ourselves, leaving severely alone the events covered so elo-

quently by silence, and ineradicably recorded by the masterly inactivity of the Corporal's pen, not alluding to the railway journey even, with its cramped confinement, its hurriedly-snatched meals—eaten picnic style, with hot, often rusty water drawn hurriedly from the engine during stoppages—nor the sleeping in railway trucks, the shivering therein enveloped in all available ‘panoply of war’ in the early morning, and the perspiring therein in almost the costume of impropriety in mid-day meridional sunshine; neither of the visit to Waterval, with its barbed-wire entanglements of innumerable strands, eight feet wide, and probably as high,—to enclose British prisoners—so lighted at night by electricity as to make night and day inseparable, commanded at a range of twenty yards by a machine gun, and vigilantly hedged round by Boer sentries. Neither shall we touch upon orders to horse coinciding with the mounting manœuvre, jumping up in the middle of meals to throw blanket and cloak on the saddle and ride away from our kit, with all its curios collected during

our belligerent peregrinations ; not to mention our few cherished household gods brought out here from England—riding away from these at a minute's notice, with a shrewd and wholly justifiable presentiment that we shall see them no more ; riding out of day into twilight and darkness, or into moonlight and clouds of dust thrown up by the waggons we escort, or the feet of our own and comrades' horses ; awed into silence by that peculiar 'rustle of mounted men on soft Veldt' ; passing empty caravans of unescorted waggons, looking ghostlike through the dust and moonlight, with Kaffirs shouting and cracking whips over slow, stubborn oxen till the dim night becomes a pandemonium of devils while the convoy passes, when—bar peculiar rustlings—silence reigns again over us and this enemy-infested country, through which, with a haste appropriate to such an environment, we ride, occasionally passing the smouldering ashes of a burnt-out farm, or seeing above the horizon the lurid glare of a burning one, until, the moon failing, we bivouac till daylight, put out Cossack posts

and other vigilances, which consume hot coffee to soften the asperity of their vigil, some softening it, to their shame, with surreptitious sleep.

Or, again, in dim mornings, literally groping one's way into the saddle, and away before there is light enough to be attacked by, through more dust and blazing sun, till we join more troops, or reach some place of comparative security where we can breathe a little, where perhaps we find soldiers resting, well protected by batteries of guns and artfully-placed sentries, or perhaps indulging in an impromptu race-meeting or some such amusement. These are things of the Hiatus, things which we very properly avoid, as we do the day bivouac, the pause of the column while the officers dispose the force, the rapid picketing of horses when our 'lines' are marked out, the rush for scarce firewood, the posting of reluctant guards and sentries, the feeding horses, all nose in bag, the group of men cooking, the smoking after meals round glowing camp-fires, and the darkness again, with the lines of saddles and rows of muffled

sleeping figures, oblivious of South Africa and bivouacs, till that most hideous of bugle-calls, the *reveillé*, sounds, or, when in the enemy's presence, until roused by the sentry. Then the moving off of the column, the throwing out of advance and flanking patrols, the solitude of such a duty, with its silent creeping along the lonely Veldt, surprising often strange birds and stranger animals, who, of all visitors to their haunts, expected least and last of all an English Imperial Yeoman. Possibly surprising, or being surprised, by a baboon or his Brother Boer, or some other anthropoid. Or perhaps the move is for farm-burning—much sought after, meaning loot, not to say delicacies, such as chicken, turkeys, pigs, and sheep, which make every soldier for the nonce both butcher and cook. Or it may be the bivouac is left for reconnaissance purposes. The enemy is sighted, we follow, perhaps galloping, and taste that excitement which makes man-hunting the first of all sports. Then, if the enemy stands, it is an attack, a riding up to occupied kopjes, and not *all* that left bivouac return thereto.

These and the exigencies of the march, such as broken-down waggons, unruly drivers, who get sentenced to attachment to waggon-wheels and castigation by sjambok, meals cooked in fifteen minutes and eaten in one, are not in the Diary, but in the Hiatus. Without a Hiatus, all these, and perhaps many more things, it would have fallen within the editorial province to place, even in the most sketchy manner, before the reader. But we ignore these things and pass on.

The Hiatus, as we said, is bounded on the now hither side to us by a date in January of the present year; Nineteen Hundred and One, and the Corporal writes at a spot 'somewhere about the equator'—heavens! is the enemy so far north? Ah! on board H.M. transport *Canada*. Then the Corporal is on his way home? It seems so. 'Invalided after an enteric relapse.' He is nearing home, and we the end of his and our duties. We imagine many readers will receive this announcement gratefully.

The Corporal is up on his critical legs again. 'The *Canada*,' says he, 'carries

some seven hundred invalided men, also the Commander-in-Chief and Staff, some nursing sisters, and some officers, general and otherwise. The officers and others, numbering possibly between fifty and sixty, occupy some three-fourths of the ship's accommodation. Some seven hundred men enjoy unrestricted liberty in the other fourth, excepting, of course, such restrictions as ship's masts, taffrails, hatchways, steam-winchcs, capstans, stanchions, ventilators, horses'-boxes, hose-pipes, boatswains, mates, boatswains'-mates, cooks, cooks'-mates, horses, and other marine incidental impedimenta. These seven hundred are invalids. There is seating accommodation for at most fifty men' on the deck-room allotted to them—not counting the scuppers—'which no doubt we should use with relish were it not for the deck-washing pestilence which seems to have attacked the crew with virulence three days from Cape Town, and has since become chronic.'

The Corporal seems to have got thus far homeward in comparative silence, and the Diary is only reminiscent of 'incidents *en*

*voyage* at a premium,' unless we count 'placidly drawing up in a Veldt railway-station in that troubled Orange River Colony, to pass the night under the secure wing of strong infantry pickets, and there to hear four hundred yards of line and a culvert blown up, as it were, under our very noses.' Or, 'passing one spot of real interest, that chequer-board valley of abundance, green with fields, rich with vineyards, and musical with running rivers; insulated from the desert with almost vertical four thousand feet of impregnable rock, sublime and *indescribable*,' hence, no doubt, the Corporal's endeavour to *describe* the Hex River Valley. The said sublimity being a hot-bed of disloyalty, by the way.

The Commander-in-Chief has often openly expressed himself on the soldier; here we have the Corporal gazing upwards to the very highest apex of the military peak and finding there a little man known to everyone by his portraits, and exactly like them. His most conspicuous attribute is to the Corporeal eye an appearance of concentrated physical



energy ; his most conspicuous feature, a high forehead ; his most noticeable expression, settled sadness, upon which the Corporal concludes that from the advantageous altitude of so high a social place the Commander-in-Chief has seen more of this world than is calculated to make a man look cheerful.

*En voyage* 'we call at St. Helena, seeing only in the distance the spot on which Napoleon Bonaparte consecrated this desert island as the Prison of Genius, which England desecrates by sacrilegiously confining Cronje and his Boers there. We spend a day at Madeira, apparently Elysium, and are there received by the Portuguese authorities with a superabundant bombardment of black powder salutes, and a little hysteria from the British residents. All day long the island resounds with rockets and gun-fire, but we cannot determine if this is in honour of our Field-Marshal or mere jubilation on the part of the inhabitants at living in such an Eden, or a religious celebration, or a mere frightening of the crows,' etc.

Apropos of an entry about this time, we

should, had it been possible, have procured the Corporal's opinion on the duration of those anodyne indifference effects upon our sensibilities. 'We had yesterday a burial on board'—burial of a Yeoman, to wit—'quite young, full of school-boyish delight at returning home, after safely experiencing the stern realities of war to an extent out of all proportion to his years. He died from an enteric relapse brought on by the sea, or transport life. Next day at mess, his name, inadvertently read, was received with laughter.' The slip was a joke, then, to Indifference. 'Anodyne or no anodyne,' says the Corporal, 'we thank God we disembarked early at Southampton, and were spared seeing his friends, summoned thither by cable from him before his death.' Next entry: 'Ashore again in England.' And the Diary ends.

## CHAPTER IX

### RECAPITULATORY

SO the Corporal is home once more. Treads his fatherland with, we take it, a light step, or as light a one as the fat living of hospital regimen allows. He comes ashore, it seems, alone in the crowd—after deserted Africa, England is a crowd all over—with twelve months' soldiering, nine months of it active warfare, behind him, and he comes ungreeted—unnoticed, in fact. He is despatched on one month's furlough, no doubt to enable the military system to gather itself together a little for so momentous an undertaking as the discharge of a civilian soldier. As a matter of fact, the Military System, in the Corporal's as in most cases, can only in a month accomplish a fraction of its pecuniary obligations to the

Corporal, though in the time of crisis it snapped him up in a day, and though it discharges him and itself of such future obligations as it would drop a 'hot coal. Seeing that it cannot compel him to fight for it, it has no further use nor gratitude for him, obviously.

And the Corporal's experience, too, is a rule holding good for the whole Corps of Imperial Yeomanry. It, the Corps, comes back Corporal-wise once again to the country for which it has made sacrifices at home, braved danger in battle and death in hospital at the seat of that laborious Boer War. Everybody has seen or heard of these battered, fever - stricken dribblets of tried soldiers arriving here, leaving behind a diminishing twenty-five per cent. to battle with the smouldering embers of the slowly-dying struggle. Though we sympathize with the Corporal, neither sympathy nor the above controversial contemporary matter lies within the editorial sphere, so when ashore we will see what the Yeomen will do.

We have again consulted with the Corporal,

and seen that such an one will do, probably with variations, according to circumstances, much as the Corporal himself did. Firstly, he will not share in any bewildering welcomes, he will not be banqueted on his arrival, nor invested with municipal honours, nor presented with civic freedom, neither will he be entertained with a high-class exhibition of Anglo-Saxon hysteria. In detail, he will be bundled into some obscure obsolete fort, left to go his own gait for a month, and then go a gait according to military whim ; or, failing such, be put under arrest, probably. His chief entertainment will be afforded him in the opportunity of contemplating the departure of some five thousand or more additional Yeomanry recruits leaving or left for South Africa. And if, like the Corporal, he is not one of those superior persons who scorn the pecuniary difference between one and five-pence and five shillings, he will wonder in what way he has so ill-served his country in matters military as to be denied the humble three shillings and sevenpence per day which these five thousand are to receive additional,

for finally quenching the smouldering embers of that fire of which he has been battling for nearly a twelvemonth with the flames. But he will find this and other ways of Government passing strange, and had best leave them alone.

*Du reste*, he will visit all his old haunts—school-boy like in holiday time—and view them through the new eyes that his travels and experience have given him ; compare the new and the old aspects, and not improbably do so with results not wholly favourable to the new. He will gradually settle down again after this unusual disturbance to his domestic quietude, into the old routine ; and in the resumption of old occupations and interests, his mind will only turn occasionally to South Africa and war, and then, only the prominent landmarks on ‘the horizon of his memory’ (that is the Corporal’s metaphor) will stand out clearly. Strange, too, he will find that in the security of Peace, recollection is most vivid of the Horrors of War, horrors now that seemed no horrors then, under that Anodyne Indifference of which we heard

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mention. For his own part, we know the Corporal thinks the horrors of peace greater than those of war. Whereas, we walked callously, greedily up to cornucopian farms, in many instances beautiful by years of labour; rifled and destroyed that, in half an hour, which took years to build, without so much as an idea that we were about most unbeautiful work; from this distance that military operation seems wanton—and ‘sacrilegious to the Goddess Domesticity,’ the Corporal says. Whereas, while out there, the Corporal for instance, when viewing that crowded cemetery at Bloemfontein, could only remark, with fine musical taste, that, ‘should the last trump sound the infantry *reveillé* here, there will be some that will rise, even to that august summons, reluctantly; in any case there will be bustling in such a crowd on Resurrection Day:’ he would at this present see some bad taste in that rather profane jest. In the Security of Peace the Yeoman will for the first time gauge the depth of impressions such as are made on his sensibilities by incidents kindred to the above

—incidents such as the first comrade killed, the first wounded, the first friend dead, or for that matter the first enemy.

He will reflect, too, that war as a sample of picturesqueness falls very far short of the pageant he was brought up on in the matter of military tradition; that khaki and felt are a poor substitute for red and gold, and puggaries tame beside cockades and feathers; that a small-arms fire-zone extending for a breadth of over a mile abolishes the serried phalanx and the romantic hand-to-hand encounter—abolishes, also, the apparently heroic. Also that short rushes in a crouching position from ant-hill to ant-hill, and a lying there on the abdominal parts, are, however effective as a mode of fighting, not the outward and visible manifestation of the inward and spiritually Homeric.

‘*Tempora mutantur, et nos,*’ etc., of a verity! Else, how can we believe that within one year the English Government, that monument of respectability, regularity, and tradition, should be throwing at least two-thirds of her belligerent burdens on to the shoulders



of her Irregular Army? In the early part of the year Nineteen Hundred, there gathered together in the sun-stricken theatre of war England's Irregulars, Home and Colonial. From many parts of her most distant dominions, at her call, men—of many of whom it is not too much to say that their first sight of a military manœuvre was at their own participation in actual warfare—these men throw down the peaceful emblems of their trade and take up the rifle. At home it is the same, except, perhaps, that we throw in more of the Corporal's 'gentles,' who jump from the apices of luxury to the roughest levels of hardship and danger. In the fighting line all these combine—that excellent specimen of human physique, human intelligence and manhood (this is as the Corporal finds him generally), the Colonial Soldier; come he from no matter where. And those, if not such sons of Anak, as Colonials born, yielding yet not one jot in courage and martial spirit, the English Irregular Soldier, and—in spite of modesty we must say it—the Imperial Yeoman, come he also from no matter where—

he. They combine, they are welcomed, nay, are almost beseeched, not that they needed beseeching—by the highest apostles of military tradition to march into the ‘head and front of war.’

It is unprecedented.

They serve, these do, and are decimated. The apostles cry aloud for more ; cannot get on without more ; get more, and are getting on.

It is astounding and extremely fortunate.

It will be noticed that the style of the above reflects much of the phrase and mental attitude of the Diary. It is no extract therefrom, but is a brief recapitulation under the Corporal’s prompting. Forgive him if he inclines a little too favourably towards his own corps. No doubt the ardour, with which he and his fellow-‘gentles’ threw up the sweets of life, has discoloured his judgment somewhat both of the hardships and use of his voluntary service. The reader will therefore, an it please him, serve with cold common - sense the Corporal’s effusion,

throughout as well as above, according to taste.

For our own part, and after consultation with the Corporal in his less ardent moments, we cannot say anything worse of the Yeomanry than is to be remarked of the proverbial gift horse. A volunteer is somewhat of a gift horse, and though we may on outward inspection, as in the Yeomanry, find imperfection in small detail, the proverbial constitutional blemish discoverable in the proverbial mouth is not to be diagnosed as a vital organic failing. If the Yeomanry was weakly alloyed with the love of a little cheap heroism, it was alloyed with nothing more serious. And, in truth, this blend of the true and spurious, whatever the proportions may have been, has not made the complete article any less serviceable in the rough usages of war, and moreover we can rest assured, that the Yeomen, gentle and ungentle, have well earned some little heroism. If we have a criticism to make, never let it be thought that we in the most microscopical degree wish to depreciate the eminently patriotic

spirit—now crowded out of memory by subsequent events—which, in the inception of this irregular corps, actuated the different individuals now to be handed down to history under the collective title of Imperial Yeomanry. If there was a suspicion of cheap heroism, the impulse was, nevertheless, good. If this fighting article was thus alloyed—what then? The sovereign is none the less serviceable in being not pure gold. At the moment of writing the call for Imperial Yeomanry is heard anew and louder. Obviously, in spite of the blend of true and spurious, which does exist—in short, of which there is evidence in the Corporal's testimony—the Yeomanry in the usages of war is no whit less serviceable than that most valued of alloyed coins, the English sovereign, is in the barterings of peace. By recompense we feel the Yeoman is less appreciated, however. Then, as to the heroism, think for a moment of the Corporal's short deposition, in which, if anything, his philosophic disposition inclines to ameliorate the roughness. Think of these fifteen thousand Yeomen, many of

whom fared worse than he, possibly, and, we are sure, few better. Have they not earned a little, if it be ever so little, right to the conventional title of Heroes?

We think so.

In any case—and we think not about this, but are quite positive, reviewing their work, their losses and the demand for more of their kind—we affirm, beyond possibility of denial or equivocation, that, collectively and individually, be they gentle or ungentle, these Yeomen have deserved well of their country.

In our collaborative capacity at setting out, we gave ourselves a little valedictory pat of encouragement on the back. The Corporal himself has given a valedictory pat, which we have condensed above, upon the Imperial Yeomanry's broad and martial back, and it remains only our sad duty to take our editorial farewell with all the usual 'agreements the most grateful' for such as have been patient enough to read up to here. As we apologized in the beginning for insulting the

public with a piece of Impressionism—that bastard child of all the arts—so we beg to excuse ourselves having done so.

One thing more: we have produced a mere sketch; it must necessarily be imperfect, then. If in its imperfection it might in some of its strictures injure the deserving, we cannot, with respect to ourselves, say that these strictures are revocable or undeserved. We have rather diminished the area covered by such strictures. But if in the performance of our necessary task some individual exceptions come under—and some do—the generic titles of institutions condemned, we deplore that it was impossible that it should be otherwise, and most sincerely regret that it is equally impossible under the rules governing our editorial task to vindicate by name and testimony those exceptions. More than this, we can assure them—the exceptions—that they have the genuine sympathy of the Yeomanry at large.

And so, taking the Corporal's war-worn hand in ours, it is our proud privilege to

make a profound and respectful obeisance and withdraw, leaving, as is only just, the valedictory of our collaboration in the hands of such as become our Patrons.

The existence of generous private philanthropy exercised for the benefit of soldiers—including Imperial Yeomanry—invalided home from the war, has come to our knowledge since this book was in the printer's hands. That this philanthropy, like most that is genuine, works almost in secret, does not remove it out of reach of our due and grateful recognition.

THE END



















